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17 July 2008

Mrs L Willis
The Headteacher
Bishop Stamer CofE Aided Primary School
Boothem Old Road
Stoke-on-Trent
Staffordshire
ST4 4EE

Dear Mrs Willis

**SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF BISHOP STAMER CofE
AIDED PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Following my visit with Paul Edwards, Additional Inspector, to your school on 8 and 9 July 2008, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures in January 2008. The monitoring inspection report is attached and the main judgements are set out below.

Progress since being subject to special measures is inadequate.

Newly qualified teachers may not be appointed.

This letter and monitoring inspection report will be posted on the Ofsted website. Please inform the Regional Inspection Service Provider of any factual inaccuracies within 24 hours of the receipt of this letter.

I am copying this letter and the monitoring inspection report to the Secretary of State, the chair of governors and the Director of Children and Young People's Services for Stoke-on-Trent.

Yours sincerely

Davinder Dosanjh
Her Majesty's Inspector

SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING OF BISHOP STAMER CofE AIDED PRIMARY SCHOOL

Report from the first monitoring inspection: 8 and 9 July 2008

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents, and met with the headteacher, staff, groups of pupils, the chair of governors and a representative from the local authority (LA).

Context

The current headteacher joined the school in January 2008. The school has been without a deputy headteacher since October 2007. A new senior management team was formed in January 2008 by drawing from the team of middle leaders. Further changes were made in April 2008. The full leadership team will not be in place until September 2008.

Achievement and standards

There has been a very slight improvement in standards at Key Stage 2 in English, mathematics and science but this improvement has not been sufficient to eradicate the underachievement. Overall, the 2007 national test results demonstrated inadequate achievement and the early indications are that this year's test results will not be significantly different.

The school's tracking of pupils' progress, lesson observations and analysis of work in books demonstrate that pupils are making inadequate progress overall in Years 3 to 6. More able pupils in particular are not making sufficient progress, particularly in their writing, mathematics and science. Pupils of middle ability make satisfactory progress and there is evidence that lower attaining pupils are making better progress due to the more focused and intensive support. The school has detailed tracking information on how well pupils are achieving and this information is being used to determine the level of intervention required to accelerate progress. However, some of the strategies are too new to impact on the overall rate of progress and address the legacy of underachievement. Children in the Nursery and Reception classes continue to make good progress. Standards in Years 1 and 2 are getting better. The impact of the effective phonics programme can be seen with pupils attaining standards in both reading and writing that are similar to that seen nationally.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in January 2008:

- target support in Years 3 to 6 to those who are most in need, especially the higher and lower ability pupils identified as underachieving – inadequate.

Personal development and well-being

Pupils behave well and there are good relationships between pupils and staff. Pupils say that behaviour in the playground has improved. This is due to changes in the use of playground equipment and they feel much safer as a result. Most are eager to learn, but occasionally a small number lose concentration when they are not fully engaged in lessons. Older pupils do not have sufficient opportunities in lessons to develop independent learning skills. Pupils' inadequate progress in writing across the curriculum in Key Stage 2 means pupils are not effectively prepared for the next step in their education.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning in the Foundation Stage are good and, throughout the Nursery and Reception classes, children continue to make good progress. Pupils progress satisfactorily in Key Stage 1 and standards are now closer to the national average by the end of Year 2 in reading, writing and mathematics.

The quality of teaching and learning in Years 3 to 6 is not improving quickly enough to ensure pupils make better progress and address the legacy of underachievement. The school has recently introduced new planning sheets to help staff pitch work more accurately to pupils' ability. However, these are too new to have had any impact. Less able pupils are making slightly better progress as the result of improved interventions. However, teachers are not yet providing work that is sufficiently challenging for the most able, particularly in writing, mathematics and science. There is evidence of some good practice, but there continues to be too much teaching that is only satisfactory or inadequate. Some teachers spend too long instructing the pupils, not giving them sufficient opportunity to carry out the planned activities. Not all teachers are yet sufficiently skilled in identifying the National Curriculum levels of pupils' work, nor in using day to day assessment to plan the next stage of learning. Learning support assistants are generally deployed well, particularly when provided with clear instructions and direction by the teachers. However, occasionally they do not have a clear focus which inhibits their effectiveness.

The school has begun to address the issue of the amount of time allotted to science in Years 3 to 6. However, as yet, there is no clear curriculum plan that ensures pupils build week on week on what they have covered and that an appropriate amount of time is devoted to each of the areas of science. For example, an inordinate amount of time is spent studying plant growth but with little indication that it is building on the pupils' prior understanding. Teachers have recently introduced more opportunities for investigative work, but there is still some considerable way to go to ensure the pupils take 'charge' of the investigations to develop their independence. At the moment there is no reliable tracking of pupils' progress in science and it is difficult for the teachers to know whether the pupils are achieving as well as they should. There are far too few opportunities for pupils to write at length during literacy sessions and to undertake extended writing activities in other subjects. The problem is compounded by the use of worksheets which demand too little from the pupils.

The school has detailed tracking and assessment information and is making use of the data to group pupils according to need and in planning interventions. However, teachers are not always accurate in their assessment of pupils' ability and this makes the use of the data problematic. Teachers mark pupils' work regularly and systematically and use comments to praise good work. Occasionally, teachers indicate what the pupils need to do to improve, but this process is not consistent throughout the school and rarely are the comments followed up to ensure the pupils take note. Similarly, ensuring pupils are aware of their targets is not consistent enough to have a sufficient impact on learning. There is some evidence of their use in English but they are not referred to sufficiently by the teachers for them to provide pupils with enough academic guidance.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in January 2008:

- improve rates of progress in Years 3 to 6 by ensuring that work is matched fully to the needs of pupils – inadequate
- devote enough time to science in Years 3 to 6 to ensure that the curriculum covers all that it should and progress is improved – inadequate.

Leadership and management

Leadership and management within the school are improving but there has not been sufficient accelerated progress since the inspection in January 2008. This is partly due to some subject leaders not being appointed until April 2008. Since their appointment, they have grown in confidence and their roles are more clearly defined than previously. Some helpful groundwork has already been carried out, particularly in literacy. The procedures for monitoring the work of the school are potentially sound. The headteacher and members of the school leadership team have checked teachers' planning and pupils' work, analysed assessment information, and observed all staff. This has led to prompt action to tackle some of the school's weaknesses. However, teachers are unclear of how to accelerate and improve pupil progress. Staff are working cooperatively with the school leadership team to eliminate the areas of concern and are receptive to the changes being introduced. The school improvement plan provides a sound framework for further improvement, although the success criteria do not sufficiently enable the school to measure and evaluate the progress being made.

Leaders and managers now have a reasonable view of the strengths and weaknesses in teaching and learning and have undertaken joint observations to develop the expertise of middle leaders. There is an increase in the amount of lesson monitoring being undertaken by leaders and managers who recognise there is still not enough focus on pupils' learning and their progress. A range of appropriate training has taken place. As yet this has not had sufficient time to significantly improve the quality of teaching and learning. Although advances have been made in ensuring lesson planning meets the needs of different abilities, the quality of planning is still superficial. There remains too much inconsistency in the work of the school despite the range of monitoring and professional development being undertaken.

Governors are gaining more confidence in their work and have received training on the data analysis and feel more able to ask the right questions. The governing body

set up a monitoring and evaluation committee which has met once. Governors are beginning to challenge the school about the progress of more able pupils. They are now linked to key areas of the curriculum to help them understand and monitor the school's work.

The school acted quickly to address issues regarding risk assessments and health and safety. A number of staff have received first aid training and the school has now put in place a rolling programme of training to ensure skills are kept updated. Risk assessments have been updated and completed on all relevant areas. Two fire drills have been undertaken since the last inspection.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in January 2008:

- carry out more rigorous monitoring of the school's work to identify the main priorities for improvement and ensure that all health and safety requirements are met – inadequate.

External support

The local authority statement of action is satisfactory. Despite some useful advisory support, the impact of the LA's work has been limited. The external support for science only happened in June, but not with the science consultant as identified in the statement of action. The LA undertook a helpful review of leadership and management and the quality of provision in June 2008 and identified key issues to follow up. The LA now has to add further monitoring and evaluation dates for 2008–2009 to its plan.

Priorities for further improvement

- As a matter of urgency ensure there is a detailed curriculum plan for science across Years 3 to 6 to provide continuity in pupils' learning experiences. Make sure the plan's implementation is monitored regularly by the senior leadership team.
- Provide more opportunities for writing in literacy and across the curriculum in Years 3 to 6.
- Ensure that assessment information is used effectively by teachers to plan lessons and give clear guidance to pupils on how they are doing and what they need to do to improve further, particularly the more able pupils.