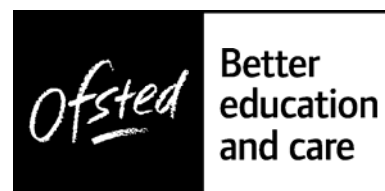


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30 March 2006

Mr Geoff Horne
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Dear Mr Horne

SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF CLACKCLOSE COMMUNITY PRIMARY SCHOOL

Introduction

Following my visit with Pat Cox and John Foster Additional Inspectors, to your school on 14 and 15 March 2006, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the second monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures in May 2005.

This letter 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.

Evidence

Inspectors observed 17 part lessons, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, 2 deputy headteachers, heads of core subjects, chair of governors, representatives from the local authority (LA) and the school council.

Context

Since the last monitoring visit there have been changes to the staffing complement. A new headteacher has been appointed with effect from September 2006. One temporary deputy Headteacher intends to leave the school at the end of this term to take up another post elsewhere. The second temporary deputy headteacher has agreed to remain in post until December 2006.

Achievement and standards

A detailed review of the results of 2005 national tests was included in the previous monitoring letter. Assessments of pupil attainment in February 2006 indicates that some pupils have made better progress than in the past, but a significant proportion of Year 6 may not achieve their targets in tests later this year. The main reason for this is that the quality of teaching is not good enough to make an impact on the legacy of underachievement in previous years. Too many satisfactory lessons do not sufficiently challenge and inspire learners. Planning does not include varied tasks that meet the needs of all learners, particularly for those in mixed age classes. Teacher's use of assessment is variable; however, the school is now working hard to regularly check the progress of individual pupils and identify those at risk of underachieving. Additional support is being provided to ensure all pupils can achieve their very best in national tests next term.

In lessons, achievement is satisfactory and at times good where the best teaching is found. Lessons are not always well planned to provide sufficient challenge, particularly for more able pupils. When lessons fail to interest and enthuse pupils, or teachers do not set high expectations, progress is less pronounced.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in May 2005:

- Improve teaching, learning and achievement, above all in English, maths, science and ICT – satisfactory progress.

Personal development and well-being

Most pupils continue to behave well around school and in lessons. They are polite, helpful, know the school rules which are applied consistently, and understand what kind of behaviour is expected. There are good relationships between pupils and with adults in the classroom. Even when teaching fails to stimulate, the pupils continue to behave satisfactorily, although they tended to fuss and chatter as their attention waned. Social skills are developed well from the Foundation Stage, where the children are taught to take care of themselves and to take turns. Lunchtimes and assemblies are calm, social occasions for pupils to gather together and enjoy themselves. However, the pupils say that there is still too much name-calling in the playground.

The low rate of exclusion reflects the improvement in pupil behaviour. The few remaining instances of poor behaviour have been resolved and most pupils display very positive attitudes to learning. Attendance is satisfactory, the school meets the challenging targets it sets for itself. The school council has a developing role in the school's decision making process and individuals were involved well in the selection of the new headteacher. There are too few opportunities for all pupils to use their initiative and independence in lessons. When given the opportunity, most pupils work well together and take responsibility well. The school takes good care of its pupils and they feel safe and secure. They say there is an adult they can talk to if

they are upset or in trouble. Those with learning difficulties are given good support in class and in the special unit, where they have programmes that are specifically matched to their needs.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in May 2005:

- Resolve the few remaining pupil behaviour difficulties which disrupt others' learning – good progress.

Quality of provision

The quality of teaching has improved since the previous visit, however, there is still too much teaching that does not move the pupils on quickly enough and too little that is good or better. The pockets of good teaching in some classrooms demonstrate common features of good practice. Lessons were planned carefully to build on what pupils know, understand and can do. Differentiated activities supported the less able and stretched the more able. Lessons were interesting, fast-paced, with challenging and exciting tasks. Expectations were consistently high. Pupils had good opportunities to work in groups and develop their speaking and listening skills.

However, there is still no whole-school recognition of what constitutes good teaching. The major shortcoming in many lessons remains, the inconsistent use of test data and ongoing assessment to plan work at a suitable level for all the pupils. There are times when the less able only complete work because they have considerable support, or the more able or older pupils continue to reinforce skills that are already secure. Planning is not yet consistent and it is sometimes used too rigidly so that it restricts the flow of the lesson. Although the individual education plans for those pupils with learning difficulties are written clearly, there is little reference to them in many teachers' planning. Pupils throughout the school have targets in English, mathematics and science and when these are used effectively they know what they need to do to reach them. However, some do not fully understand their targets and teachers rarely refer to them in lessons or in their marking.

When the teaching was inadequate, it was slow, dull and not sufficiently demanding. The pupils reported that they do not always find lessons enjoyable or interesting. Teaching assistants make a sound contribution through their work with individuals and groups but are often under-occupied at the beginnings and ends of lessons. The quality of display has improved and some classrooms are stimulating places where the pupils' work is celebrated well.

Since the last monitoring visit, the school has undertaken an in-depth review of the timetables for each class and year group. Each class now has at least the recommended number of hours teaching time and the balance of time allocated for each subject is in line with national recommendations. Pupils now enjoy equal access to all aspects of the National Curriculum.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in May 2005:

- Improve teaching, learning and achievement, above all in English, maths, science and ICT – satisfactory progress.
- Ensure that timetables provide a balanced curriculum for all classes, utilising at least the recommended curriculum time – good progress.

Leadership and management

Leadership and management remain satisfactory. The acting headteacher, well supported by both deputy headteachers, continues to lead the school well. The recent appointment of a new headteacher, who will take up the post in September 2006, is a positive move by the governing body. The governors have also sought the appointment of a deputy headteacher, but were unsuccessful at interview as no suitable candidate was found. However, the local authority has agreed to one of the acting deputy headteachers remaining in post until December 2006, when a substantive appointment will be made, with the involvement of the new headteacher. This will provide essential continuity in leadership and management and maintain the focus on addressing the key issues raised in the inspection.

The school is monitoring the teaching of the core subjects and plans to extend this to include subject leaders, who are becoming increasingly aware of what they need to do to improve the rate of pupils' achievement in their subjects. Whilst some monitoring of pupils' work has taken place, the programme is at an early stage of implementation and has yet to have a significant impact on teaching and learning or in raising standards. The governing body has worked well to alleviate the difficulties relating to the split site. Draft plans have been drawn up for a new build on the main site and sources of funding explored and partly identified. Timescales for the implementation of these plans are unclear. The governors continue to work with the local authority to confirm details of the proposals to bring provision for all pupils onto a single site at the earliest opportunity.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in May 2005:

- Make subject management more effective, particularly in consistent use of assessment systems – satisfactory progress.
- Clarify the relationship between senior managers and staff so that all policies are effectively and consistently implemented – good progress.
- Work with the relevant authorities to minimise the impact of the split site and to plan for the long-term solution to the problem – satisfactory progress.

External support

The LA continues to provide good support and has contributed directly to the progress made. It has supported the school through the interviews for a new deputy headteacher and the successful appointment of the new headteacher. It has taken positive action to seek a long term solution to the problems caused by the split-site

school. It now needs to ensure that the proposals are carried forward to the next stage of development and timescales are shared with the school and the local community. It has responded well to the recommendations made after the first visit and produced a clear plan with stepping stones to improvement.

Main Judgements

Progress since being subject to special measures – satisfactory progress.

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – good progress.

Newly qualified teachers may be appointed on condition that they are supported by teachers with a track record of effective teaching.

Priorities for further improvement

- Increase lesson monitoring to identify the best practice in the school and share this information to increase the amount of good or better teaching.
- Make better use of assessment data to plan differentiated work that matches the needs of all pupils and makes learning enjoyable.
- Ensure subject leaders take more responsibility for what's happening in their subject, and provide teachers with the support and challenge they need to raise achievement further.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the Director of Education for Norfolk LA and the chair of governors.

Yours sincerely

John Mitcheson
H M Inspector