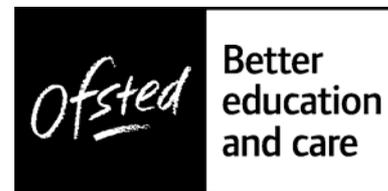


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27 June 2005

Mrs S Nettey
Headteacher
Princess Frederica CE Primary School
College Road
London
NW10 5TP

Dear Mrs Nettey

Implementation of Princess Frederica CE Primary School's Action Plan

Following my visit to your school on 8 and 9 June 2005, with my colleague Mr Robert Ellis HMI, I write to confirm the findings and to notify you of the outcomes.

As you know, the inspection was part of a policy involving a broader series of visits by HMI and Additional Inspectors to check on the development and improvement of schools which have been designated by their section 10 inspection as having serious weaknesses. You will recall that the focus of the inspection was to assess: the pupils' standards of attainment and their progress; the quality of education provided; the leadership and management of the school; the pupils' attitudes and behaviour; and the progress that has been made in implementing the action plan and removing the causes of the serious weaknesses.

During the visit we inspected 15 lessons or part lessons; attended several registration periods; scrutinised a wide range of documentation provided by the school; and held discussions with you and nominated staff on the areas for improvement identified in the section 10 inspection. We also examined a range of pupils' work and spoke informally with other staff and pupils.

On the basis of the evidence gathered during the visit, I made the following observations to you, the deputy headteacher, representatives of the governing body, a representative of the diocese, and a representative of the local education authority (LEA).

The results in the national tests in 2004 indicated that the pupils at Key Stage 1 attained above average scores when national comparisons were made. However, at Key Stage 2 there was a dip in performance for all pupils in all subjects. The

school has carefully tracked the progress made by the pupils over this academic year, and has data which suggests that the school's results are improving and that the future trend over time is likely to be upward. Attainment at Key Stage 1 has remained above average with improvements being made on last year's results. At Key Stage 2, the pupils' attainment has improved and the school is on track to meet its targets in mathematics and science, but is likely to fall just short in English. The proportion of pupils attaining the higher level 5 in all subjects is also likely to improve.

In most lessons, standards reached national expectations; however, they were rarely above national expectations except at the Foundation Stage. The progress the pupils make is mostly at least sound and is sometimes good.

Standards in English at the top end of Key Stage 2 are generally at national expectations, although about half the Year 6 and all of the Year 5 pupils were on visits during the inspection. Although an increasing proportion of the pupils achieve at the higher levels, the school is aware that it has some way to go to ensure that all the pupils fulfil their potential. The school's provision in English at Key Stage 2 has improved and this is reflected in lessons and in the books of most pupils in the majority of classes. The provision at Key Stage 1 remains sound and the school has worked hard to improve further the pupils' writing.

The pupils speak confidently and often use technical vocabulary accurately. There was good use of resources and activities which interested the pupils. The majority of the pupils worked productively on their English tasks and with interest, though occasionally a few did not apply themselves as well as they might have. The written work was generally well presented but a few pupils, in some classes, were careless with their work and made mistakes in spelling common words. The pupils cover an appropriate range of work and write for a variety of purposes. A few pupils have recently had their poems published. The use of information and communication technology (ICT) as a teaching tool for English is being developed and the teachers are gaining in expertise.

Achievement in mathematics is satisfactory. Improvements in the quality of teaching and higher expectations have enabled most pupils to make reasonable progress. Weaknesses in previous provision have resulted in some pupils having gaps in their knowledge and understanding, but effective tracking of the pupils' progress and detailed analysis of test results have enabled the school to implement intervention programmes to address the underachievement.

Science teaching has a strong emphasis on practical and investigative work and the pupils make predictions about the expected outcomes of their experiments. Most pupils record their results systematically and draw graphs and charts to represent

their data. The pupils in Year 4 used a good range of scientific terms and spoke confidently when describing their work and explaining their conclusions. Tasks were well matched to the pupils' needs and prior attainment, and appropriate support and encouragement were provided when required. A new common planning format is in place and training has been provided to enable teachers to increase their scientific knowledge and understanding. A focus on the use of assessment to identify the pupils' achievements and next steps for learning has had a positive impact on increasing the pace of learning.

Overall, the quality of teaching is satisfactory. It was satisfactory or better in 14 of the 15 lessons. One lesson was very good, seven were good, six satisfactory and one unsatisfactory. The quality of the teaching and learning was closely linked. Where the teaching was effective and decisive, the pupils made sustained progress during the lesson. The pupils were keen learners and responded well to the wide range of teaching and learning strategies used in the most successful lessons. Most pupils sustained good levels of concentration, although where the teaching was less well focused the pupils lost some momentum to their learning.

In the best lessons, the teachers had planned activities which made effective use of the pupils' own interests and ideas. Resources were well used. In a number of classes, the input was vibrant and spirited; this excited the pupils and made them keen to participate. Planning was generally of a good quality and expectations were high. The teachers gave clear instructions and maintained a good pace to their lessons. Relationships between the pupils and the teachers were very good. There was effective monitoring of the pupils' learning and appropriate intervention. Questioning was successfully used to check the pupils' understanding and to develop and extend their thinking. In science, for example, the pupils were encouraged to think beyond the task. There was good use of speaking and listening partners. In the best lessons, the support staff were well used and made a valuable contribution to the pupils' learning

The lessons that had some weaknesses, including the one unsatisfactory lesson, had a number of common features. Weaker planning, with a lack of clarity about timings for the lessons, resulted in too slow a pace. In some classes, important aspects of the lesson were omitted, resulting in the pupils not gaining as much understanding and knowledge as they required to complete their independent work. Matching the work to the full range of needs was at times weak and the more able were unchallenged. Questions were not always helpful in enabling the pupils to think more deeply about topics. Sometimes the teacher's exposition confused the pupils. In these weaker lessons, the teachers did not have a sufficient depth of understanding about the topics they were teaching. Support staff did not always play an active part and some were too passive during whole class sessions.

The school has increasingly effective procedures for tracking the pupils' progress and ensures that unsatisfactory progress is recognised and acted upon; it is working on ways to ensure that those who could achieve more highly are also appropriately identified. National and optional test results are analysed and the information is used to set agreed targets and place pupils in appropriate teaching groups. The school has information on how different groups of pupils perform and tracks the progress of boys and girls, pupils with English as an additional language and those who have special education needs. For the latter two groups, it is able to show that these pupils make appropriate progress. It is also able to demonstrate that there are no significant gender differences in attainment.

Although the teachers identify assessment opportunities in their planning, not all make the best use of assessment information to move the learning on, particularly for the more able pupils. The teachers' marking was frequent and often provided good advice as to how the pupils could improve or develop their work. However, the advice was not always followed up by the pupils. Some marking was inconsistent, and examples were seen where incorrect work had been marked as being correct and the pupil had been praised for getting all the questions right. Marking did not always relate to the learning objective and sometimes failed to identify how mistakes could be corrected. The pupils are involved in assessing their own work and this has had a positive impact on their learning. However, in one class, where the pupils' self-assessment and peer assessment had been used, the teacher's scrutiny of the marked work did not always identify errors in the pupils' marking. Consequently, the teacher did not have a clear picture of what the pupils had understood or if the learning objective had been achieved.

The physical appearance of the school has been improved and best use is made of a potentially challenging environment. The displays of the pupils' work enhance the learning environment considerably, and the outside classroom and nature area are very good resources which are well used. The pupils have access to a good range of extra-curricular activities, and the newly developed interactive school web page has the potential to keep the parents and wider community fully informed about the school and its activities. It is very attractively set out and is the result of much hard work and very good levels of collaboration between the school and the governing body.

Overall, the pupils' personal development is satisfactory, with behaviour being good and attitudes satisfactory. Attitudes and behaviour were always at least satisfactory; they were good or better in 8 lessons. There is a positive ethos of mutual respect and understanding, and relationships are very good between adults and pupils and between pupils. The pupils warmly welcome visitors to the school. The pupils are mostly keen to learn and where the teaching is effective they work

hard in lessons and sustain good concentration levels. In a few classes, the pupils tended to be a little unsettled when they worked independently or when they moved from class work to group work, and there were some low levels of unrest and lack of attention. In classes and around school, the pupils are polite, courteous and good humoured and they behave very well. There is a common understanding of agreed rules of conduct and of strategies to manage behaviour. The school actively celebrates a range of different cultures and this is evident in much of the curricular work and in displays around the school. Attendance is improving and at 95.7 per cent is above the national average; there have been seven fixed-term exclusions from Key Stage 2 classes in the past year, most of these boys.

The leadership and management of the headteacher is very good, and she has worked productively with the deputy headteacher who ably supports her in identifying issues and future developments for the school. The senior management team has been expanded to include a wider range of staff who are developing skills and systems to monitor and evaluate the provision and standards in their areas of responsibility. The school has developed an effective range of monitoring activities and is making good use of the findings. Teaching and learning are regularly monitored, staff are given clear feedback, and performance appraisal has been used to ensure that the momentum of improvement is sustained. The headteacher and her deputy are usefully considering how best to rationalise the systems used so that the greatest use is made of the skills and experience of the staff. They have recently developed good systems which involve peer tutoring so that staff expertise can be shared.

The school's self evaluation is concise and sound in quality. It clearly addresses the issues, though further detail might have been provided on the impact of specific actions taken. The action plan is good. It contains all necessary elements: relevant success criteria for the school to measure its progress, and clearly set out systems for monitoring and evaluation of the actions taken. It is having a good impact and the school is actively preparing for the future.

Governance has continued to improve. The governors provide good support for the headteacher and have developed their role of critical friend. Governors have undertaken training so that they can monitor and evaluate the work of the school more effectively. Individual governors are linked to subject areas and several have conducted school visits to monitor and report on the quality of provision. Financial management is sound and principles of best value are applied.

During the inspection, a fire drill showed that pupils could leave their classes and return in good order with very little time wasted. However, a number of areas in the school do not have fire drill instructions and exit routes are not clearly marked.

The LEA provides good support; it has a clear understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development. The link adviser has forged productive links with the headteacher and has supported her appropriately in identifying how to improve the provision. The LEA's statement and commentary are soundly based on a clear knowledge of the factors which affected the school's context. The LEA has implemented a good range of actions to improve the provision, and has given suitable training and guidance for school staff; these have had a good impact and the school is making swift progress in eradicating the causes of weakness.

Action taken to address the areas for improvement

1: raise standards at Key Stage 2 and in science throughout the school

As noted above, standards are rising and the school has worked hard to implement the action plan. The school is using the information it holds on pupils to target teaching more effectively. The school has benefited from LEA support to improve science teaching throughout the school and this had had a positive impact. Progress on this key issue has been good.

2: improve the quality of teaching especially in Years 4 to 6

Teaching at Key Stage 2 and across the school has improved since the section 10 inspection and the teachers have responded well to advice and guidance on planning and implementation. As noted above, the quality of teaching is satisfactory overall though there are increasing amounts of good or better teaching and less unsatisfactory teaching. Progress on this key issue has been reasonable.

3: check on teaching and learning even more rigorously and regularly

A very rigorous cycle of observations on teaching and learning has been implemented and these have been supplemented by spot checking, work scrutinies and peer coaching. There is now a wider group of school staff involved in monitoring and evaluation activity and all staff share a common understanding of how to improve. There is a good understanding of the school's strengths and future areas for development. Progress on this key issue has been good.

Good progress has been made in implementing the action plan and removing the causes of the school's serious weaknesses.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the chair of governors, the Diocese of London and the Director of Education for Brent.

Yours sincerely

ADELA BAIRD
HM Inspector of Schools