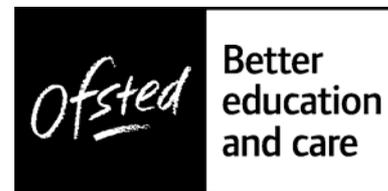


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15 June 2005

Mrs S Smith
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Smith

Implementation of St Ives Junior School's Action Plan

Following the visit of Mr A Watters HMI, and Ms L McGill HMI, to your school on 8 and 9 June 2005, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to confirm the inspection findings which are recorded in the attached note.

The visit was the sixth monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures. 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.

The school has made good progress since the last monitoring inspection and reasonable progress overall since being subject to special measures.

The school is permitted to appoint newly qualified teachers.

I am copying this letter and the note of the inspection findings to the Secretary of State, the chair of governors, and the Secretary for Education for Cornwall. This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Andrew Reid
Head of Institutional Inspections and Frameworks Division

IMPLEMENTATION OF ST IVES JUNIOR SCHOOL'S ACTION PLAN

Findings of the sixth monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures

During the visit 20 lessons or parts of lessons, four registration sessions and one assembly were inspected. Meetings were held with the headteacher, the acting deputy headteacher, other senior teachers, the chair of governors and the LEA attached inspector. Informal discussions were held with other members of staff and with pupils and samples of work were examined. A range of documents was scrutinised. Using this evidence, HMI made the following observations to the headteacher, the chair of the governing body and a representative from the LEA. HMI also presented a summary of the inspection findings to all teachers, giving particular emphasis to identifying strengths and weaknesses in the quality of teaching and learning.

While the pupils' attainment in English, mathematics and science is generally below and in some year groups well below the levels expected for their ages, standards are rising and in most year groups more pupils are making better progress. The results of non statutory tests in writing, reading and mathematics indicate clearly that the legacy of underachievement is being tackled well and that the gap between the pupils' current attainment and what they are expected to achieve for their age is closing more rapidly than previously. The improved rate of progress was reflected well in nearly all lessons where a majority of the pupils were working at the level expected for their age; in three lessons the pupils attained high standards.

In English lessons standards were broadly in line with what is expected for the pupils' ages, particularly in their speaking and listening skills. However, these skills did not match their achievement in writing, where standards remain too low. While work in the pupils' books shows that most complete tasks accurately and have a sound understanding of what they have been learning, many do not consistently use and apply this knowledge when writing at length. Much of the pupils' writing is imaginative and engaging although its quality is affected by weaknesses in sentence construction, spelling and grammar. Few pupils write neatly and fluently; again they have not transferred what they have practised into their everyday work.

The quality of teaching and learning was good in six lessons, satisfactory in 12 and unsatisfactory in two. At 90 per cent, the proportion of satisfactory or better teaching has increased a good deal since the last inspection and this is a significant improvement. Much of the satisfactory teaching was secure with some good features and the weaknesses in the two sessions which were unsatisfactory overall could easily have been avoided.

Where the teaching was good, the teachers were secure in their use of the school's agreed approaches, expectations were high, their subject knowledge was good and there was a rigorous focus on the pupils' learning and progress. The tasks were

well suited to the pupils' needs and offered a good degree of challenge. The teachers used strategies effectively to capture the pupils' interest and imagination and encourage them to get on with their work straight away. The imaginative use of mnemonics, physical actions and demonstrations helped the pupils to remember key facts and enlivened the lessons. The interactive whiteboards were used effectively to remind the pupils of what they were learning and to model the tasks they were being asked to do. The pupils' work is carefully marked. The teachers bear in mind the lesson's objective when marking, make helpful comments on the pupils' efforts and give them guidance on how to improve. The deployment of the classroom assistants has improved, but there is still scope in some classes to increase the involvement of the assistants in whole-class sessions.

Some of the relatively weaker aspects of teaching included: overly complex tasks in the pupils' independent work; a slower pace of learning caused by activities which diverted the pupils' attention away from the main point of what they were doing and work that was pitched at too low a level.

The pupils' attitudes and their behaviour were always positive; they were good in 13 lessons and very good in two. The good features noted at the last monitoring visit have been maintained and built on. The pupils usually concentrated well in lessons and got on with their work willingly, showing enjoyment and enthusiasm for activities that captured their imagination or which challenged them to think. The pupils worked well in pairs and supported one another. They have a better understanding of the part they play as learners in lessons and are developing the ability to reflect on their work and what they have learned. The pupils' good attitudes and behaviour had a positive effect on the progress they made in lessons.

The school has a very welcoming ethos. All teachers and classroom assistants enjoy supportive relationships with their pupils, who are friendly and relaxed. The pupils play happily together on the playground and respond quickly and sensibly to their teachers' instructions. Movement around the school is orderly and calm and there is a good working ethos in the classrooms. These are all strong features of the school's provision.

Curriculum planning is satisfactory with some good features, such as in literacy and numeracy and where lesson plans take full account of the pupils' different learning needs. In nearly all lessons learning objectives were used rigorously to underpin the pupils' activities and were referenced clearly to National Curriculum levels; these actions ensure that teachers have a good understanding of standards and progress and that pupils know exactly what they are required to learn. Planning formats are nearly always consistent although the planning for guided reading sessions is too variable; in some reading lessons the pupils who were taught by the teacher and teaching assistants made good progress while other pupils received too little guidance about improving their reading skills.

There is an increasingly rigorous analysis of assessment information that is used well to track the pupils' progress, identify strengths and weaknesses in teaching

and learning and evaluate the pupils' achievements. The assessment co-ordinator, who is supported well by the headteacher, provides good leadership in this important area of the school's work. Senior curriculum leaders have a good understanding of the pupils' achievements in their subjects, particularly in English, mathematics, science and geography. The pupils are encouraged to assess their own performance against lesson objectives and to take part in a generally constructive dialogue with their teachers about how to improve their work; this is a positive initiative although the school may want to consider whether it is necessary for every activity.

The headteacher provides sound leadership and is supported well by the acting deputy headteacher and other senior teachers. There is a sound programme of induction and training for teachers who have joined the school recently and staff development and training continues to be a high priority. There is a rigorous and systematic programme to monitor and evaluate the quality of teaching; targets for improvement are linked carefully to raising standards and the pupils' achievements and in lessons there is a clearer focus on the impact of the teaching on the pupils' progress. Senior teachers' job descriptions have been amended to reflect what they are expected to achieve in the medium and short term and this has brought greater clarity and sense of purpose to the school's collective leadership.

Strategic planning is generally satisfactory and the school is well placed to produce a longer-term improvement plan to guide developments over the next two to three years and set out a clear and unequivocal agenda for raising standards further. The headteacher and senior teachers are becoming more adept at evaluating the impact of initiatives although some of their written evaluations still give too great an emphasis on describing actions rather than evaluating their effectiveness. The school's senior leadership recognises that planning formats and other documentation about the school's work are becoming unnecessarily lengthy and potentially unmanageable; this is appropriate as much of the documentation presented to HMI did not reflect a sufficiently clear synthesis of the improvements made since the last inspection.

The governors and headteacher have been successful in recruiting a deputy headteacher who is expected to join the school at the beginning of the autumn term 2005. The school's staffing is far more stable than previously, with seven out of ten teachers appointed on permanent contracts.

The pupils' attendance has risen significantly; it is currently 95 per cent compared with 89.6 per cent in the spring term 2005. There is a far more rigorous approach to improving the pupils' attendance, including better communication with parents, increasing the pupils' awareness of the positive aspects of good attendance and strengthening the role of teachers.

The chair of governors provides sound leadership to the governing body and gives good support to the headteacher and senior teachers. The governors' role in monitoring progress against the action plan key issues has improved and all

governors are becoming increasingly involved in holding the school to account for the standards achieved by the pupils.

The LEA continues to provide a satisfactory level of support, particularly through the work of some curriculum consultants, for example in literacy and numeracy. Despite requests made by the school, the LEA did not participate in the recruitment and appointment of a deputy headteacher. Given the recent turbulence in staffing, particularly at a senior level, the decision not to take part in the recruitment process was ill advised.

Action taken to address the key issues

Key Issue 1: improve standards, particularly in English, mathematics, science and geography and of potentially higher attaining pupils

While standards remain too low good progress has been made in addressing this key issue.

Key Issue 2: improve the quality of teaching and learning

The progress made in addressing this key issue has been good.

Key Issue 3: ensure that teachers use all the assessment information available to them to plan work that matches the different and developing needs of pupils in their classes

Good progress has been made in addressing this key issue.

Key Issue 4: improve leadership and management

Reasonable progress has been made in addressing this key issue.

Key Issue 5: develop procedures to monitor and improve pupils' attendance and use them effectively

Good progress has been made to address this key issue.