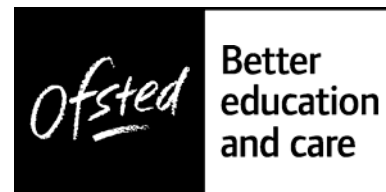


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Ms U Devi
Headteacher
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Dear Ms Devi

Implementation of Rood End Primary School's Action Plan

Following the visit of Andrew Watters HMI, Sue Barkway HMI, and Pat Cox, Additional Inspector, to your school on 4 and 5 July 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 fifth 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 reasonable progress since the last monitoring inspection and reasonable progress overall since being subject to special measures.

The school should not appoint newly qualified teachers until further notice.

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

Yours sincerely

Andrew Reid
Head of Institutional Inspections and Frameworks Division

IMPLEMENTATION OF ROOD END PRIMARY SCHOOL'S ACTION PLAN

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

During the visit 28 lessons or parts of lessons, seven registration sessions and four assemblies were inspected. Meetings were held with the headteacher, the science co-ordinator, the chair of governors and the school's improvement adviser from the LEA. Informal discussions were held with other members of staff and with pupils and samples of work were examined. Feedback was offered to individual teachers and was given to those teachers who requested it; 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.

Standards are slowly beginning to rise, albeit from a very low base; they are generally well below the levels expected for the pupils' ages but rates of progress are improving more rapidly than previously, particularly in reading and writing. The gap between the pupils' current attainment and what is expected for their age is closing at an increasingly speedy rate. In some year groups, the pupils are making very good progress to improve their basic skills in literacy, particularly in Years 1, 2 and 6. Some of the pupils in reception have made very good progress in reading and the pupils receive a very good start in the Foundation Stage nursery class. The school's results in the 2005 national tests present a mixed picture. At Key Stage 1 standards have remained low and relatively static; they have fallen in writing. At Key Stage 2 there has been a steady upward trend in the pupils' achievements although attainment levels remain low overall; the proportion of the pupils who reached the level expected for their age in English increased by 11 per cent; by 10 per cent in mathematics and 14 per cent in science.

An important initiative to improve the quality of writing and provide more opportunities for the pupils to improve their spoken English has lifted the pupils' achievements in each key stage, particularly in writing. In a relatively short period of time the headteacher has provided good subject leadership in English, ensuring a rigorous focus on standards and the pupils' progress; a range of important actions to further improve provision, such as the moderation of teachers' assessments of the pupils' written work is planned for the end of the summer term 2005.

In mathematics there is a wide range of attainment in almost all year groups and few pupils are working at the higher levels. There are significant gaps in the pupils' skills and knowledge, and their understanding of written questions; even when their comprehension was secure they often struggled to solve mathematical problems because of weaknesses in presentation, a poor recall of multiplication facts and number bonds and uncertainty about which mathematical strategies they should use. The lack of subject leadership in mathematics has impeded progress in improving pupils' basic skills.

In science the pupils' knowledge and understanding of scientific language is improving and they frequently used the correct scientific terminology to explain reasons for the results of their scientific investigations; for example, in one lesson pupils were able to explain how weight would affect the rate at which a parachute would fall. Although teachers are providing opportunities for the development of investigative skills the pupils are not being given sufficient guidance and support to help them make consistently satisfactory progress. The recently appointed subject leader is providing good leadership; she has reviewed teachers' planning and the science curriculum, scrutinised pupils' written work and given feedback to teachers. These are all positive developments.

The pupils' behaviour and attitudes were very good in four lessons, good in 12, satisfactory in nine and unsatisfactory in three lessons. Where behaviour was very good, class routines were well established and the pupils were engaged and motivated by their work. Good classroom management and relationships created many opportunities for the pupils to work together, for example in paired discussions during science lessons. Most pupils settled quickly at the start of lessons and when there was a change of activities during a lesson. When moving around the school the pupils behaved sensibly. They are courteous, polite, good humoured and welcoming to visitors; in most lessons the pupils showed respect for each other and their teachers. On the few occasions when the pupils' behaviour was unsatisfactory this was directly linked to weaknesses in the quality of teaching; for example, when the pupils found it difficult to maintain concentration and interest, generally because their activities lacked challenge or there was insufficient support to help them succeed.

Three assemblies made a positive contribution to the pupils' social and moral development although less so to their spiritual and cultural development; one other class assembly did not meet the requirement to provide a daily act of collective worship. The recent introduction of a collective worship programme provides a good framework for further development and improvement.

The pupils' current attendance rate is 92.3 per cent which is an improvement from the previous HMI visit, when it was 91.7 per cent. Nevertheless the attendance rate overall is still below the national figure for primary schools, which is 94.5 per cent. Too many pupils arrive late to school at the beginning of the day; over a seven week period since the beginning of May the proportion of pupils arriving to school on time was 88 per cent, which is too low. A range of strategies to improve the pupils' punctuality is being introduced and is expected to be evaluated on a weekly basis.

The quality of teaching and learning was very good in one lesson, good in five and satisfactory in 14 lessons; it was unsatisfactory in six lessons and poor in two lessons. The quality of teaching in the Foundation Stage was nearly always satisfactory or better; it was good in the nursery class. The quality of teaching was consistently satisfactory or better in Key Stage 1, which is a significant improvement. At Key Stage 2 the quality of teaching remains fragile; it was good

in one lesson and satisfactory in seven lessons. In five lessons teaching was unsatisfactory and in two lessons it was poor. Nevertheless, there has been a steady improvement in the overall quality of teaching since the last inspection; the proportion of satisfactory and better lessons has increased from 61 per cent to 72 per cent, which provides a more secure basis for further improvement than previously. There has been a considerable improvement in the quality of teaching in literacy where the proportion of satisfactory and better teaching has increased from 25 per cent to 80 per cent.

In the best lessons the teachers' expectations were high, class routines were well established and basic skills were taught effectively, particularly in writing, reading and speaking and listening. The pupils' work was matched well to their different learning needs and presented in imaginative and relevant contexts; the teachers' instructions and explanations were clear and the pupils knew exactly what they were required to learn by the end of a lesson. Key teaching points were reinforced frequently and objectives used well to underpin the pupils' learning. The level of guidance and support to help the pupils improve was very good, such as in two literacy lessons in Year 2 and Year 6.

In the unsatisfactory and poor lessons the teachers' subject knowledge was unsatisfactory and the pupils' tasks were either too easy or too difficult. Whole class introductions were too long and during these sessions the teachers' questions did not challenge and support the pupils' different levels of prior attainment. Planning was weak and did not take into account the wide range of ability reflected in the year group, particularly in mathematics. Teaching assistants were not deployed effectively and the pupils received too little guidance to help them achieve the lesson's objectives, particularly in group activities in science. In the poor lessons the pupils' behaviour was not managed well enough and expectations were too low.

Curriculum planning is improving, particularly in English which has been one of the school's main priorities for improvement since the previous inspection. Planning is good in the Foundation Stage nursery class but some weaknesses have emerged in the planning for pupils in the reception classes; insufficient attention is given to ensuring that important basic skills taught in whole-class sessions and focus activities are reinforced during the pupils' independent activities.

Assessment information is analysed rigorously and is used effectively at a whole-school level to identify what needs to be done to improve the pupils' achievements and set challenging individual targets for their end-of-year attainment. Teachers have good quality information on which to base their planning although this is not used consistently in all year groups. Assessment data is used well as a key management tool, enabling the headteacher to identify where the pupils' progress is too slow or where some assessments appear inaccurate. Many teachers are developing a sound understanding of National Curriculum levels; they annotate their planning to show how successful their lessons have been and are using the information to plan and amend future work. Short-term targets are

being set for the pupils in writing and these were often referred to in lessons. Nevertheless, there remains much work to do to ensure that these positive features become embedded in all year groups and classes. Marking is improving; most teachers mark the pupils' work regularly and make supportive comments. Some marking shows the pupils how well they have achieved and what they need to do next to improve. However, some of the teachers' marking is unsatisfactory and praises work where no real improvements have taken place.

The provision for the pupils who have special educational needs has improved. There is an up-to-date and accurate special needs register which identifies individual pupils and their particular needs and which meets statutory requirements. Similarly, there are up-to-date individual learning plans for all pupils who have a formal Statement of Special Educational Need and for those on the school action plus register; the plans for the pupils on the first stage of school action are being reviewed. Literacy intervention programmes are being used effectively to raise standards in reading. The school has recently used funding from the Excellence in Cities initiative to appoint and train a co-ordinator for gifted and talented pupils; the school's assessment information shows that this is having a positive impact on raising standards. While some good progress has been made to improve the provision for the pupils who have special educational needs all teachers are not yet sufficiently involved in this process and in reviewing the pupils' progress against their targets.

The absence of senior staff and reduced responsibilities of those still in school, including the deputy headteacher has caused significant disruption to the work of the school's collective leadership. There is currently no subject leadership in mathematics and information and communication technology (ICT); the headteacher is leading development in literacy and assessment and two teaching assistants, supported by LEA personnel are co-ordinating work to improve the provision for the pupils who have special educational needs.

Despite this context and the lack of a senior management team the headteacher continues to drive forward improvements impressively. She knows her school very well, provides very good leadership and is resolute in her commitment and determination to improve the quality of education. As reported previously she ensures a relentless focus on raising standards and has established a rigorous programme of monitoring, evaluation, support and intervention. Teachers are held accountable for the standards achieved by the pupils in their class; they receive detailed and helpful feedback about improving their work which is beginning to improve the overall quality of teaching and learning, although some weaknesses are proving stubbornly resistant to improvement.

Strategic planning is secure; the school's action plan has been updated to reflect continuing development and improvement. The headteacher has produced an important review of the school's current and proposed staffing structure for the year 2005/06; these proposals have been well thought out and reflect her high expectations and aspirations for the school community; they have the potential to

secure a stable and effective management structure, which is inclusive, supportive and challenging. The successful implementation of this structure and the induction of new staff will be instrumental in securing the school's capacity to sustain improvement in the medium and long term. It is expected that a new school improvement plan will be produced by the beginning of the autumn term 2005, to guide the school's work over the next two years; this is appropriate as many of the actions detailed in the post inspection action plan have been completed.

The governors and the headteacher, supported by the LEA have been successful in recruiting two experienced senior teachers to strengthen curriculum management and subject leadership and continue to improve the quality of teaching; one post is permanent and the other is a secondment for one term, in the first instance. Both teachers are enthusiastic and looking forward to making a positive difference to the quality of the pupils' education. Currently there are two vacancies for class teachers; the headteacher and governors expect to recruit and deploy teachers to fill these posts in the coming weeks.

The chair of governors is determined to improve the quality of education by ensuring that all governors hold the school to account for the standards achieved by the pupils and act as critical friends. She gives full support to the headteacher and very positive leadership to the governing body. Governors' committees meet regularly and governance is secure, although currently there are two vacancies for LEA appointed governors.

The LEA continues to provide good quality support through the work of the school's attached adviser and various curriculum consultants. The attached adviser works closely and effectively with the headteacher and has developed a good partnership with the school. Other senior LEA personnel have made a positive impact, such as improving the provision for the pupils who have special educational needs. An LEA task group monitors the school's progress and provides progress reports for the governing body. The governors continue to receive very good advice and guidance from the LEA's head of budget services, which ensures that the school's budget is monitored effectively. The LEA is committed to continuing the work of two advanced skills teachers at the school during the coming year; the headteacher accurately identifies the lack of subject leadership in mathematics as an area requiring additional support.

Action taken to address the key issues

Key Issue 1: improve the quality of leadership, governance and management of the school

The progress made in addressing this key issue has been reasonable overall; it has been good in relation to governance and the headteacher's continued drive for improvement.

Key Issue 2: raise standards in English, mathematics, science and ICT across the school

Reasonable progress has been made to improve this key issue.

Key Issue 3: improve the tracking of achievement and the use of assessment information

Reasonable progress has been made to address this key issue.

Key Issue 4: improve the quality of teaching in order to offer a consistently high level of challenge to all groups of pupils

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

Key Issue 5: improve pupils' attitudes toward an involvement in their learning

Good progress has been made to address this key issue.