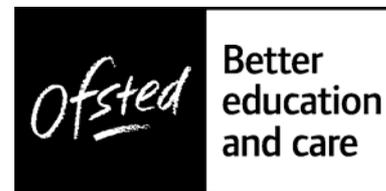


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Mr B Hedley
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Hedley

Implementation of Silverdale School's Action Plan

Following the visit of Ms A Berger HMI and Ms Andrea Lyons HMI to your school on 22 and 23 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 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 limited progress overall since being subject to special measures.

I am copying this letter and the note of the inspection findings to the Secretary of State, the chair of governors and the Head of Education and Community Services for North Tyneside.

Yours sincerely

Andrew Reid
Head of School Improvement

IMPLEMENTATION OF SILVERDALE SCHOOL'S ACTION PLAN

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

During the visit 11 lessons or parts of lessons and one assembly were inspected. Pupils were observed at breakfast, break and lunchtime. Meetings were held with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, a senior teacher, a class teacher, two teaching assistants and representatives of the LEA. 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, chair of governors and representatives from the LEA.

The pupils in Key Stage 2 make good progress overall. The teaching in this area remains consistently good and as a result the pupils are developing well. Lessons are well structured and relationships promote a positive learning ethos. The pupils' physical development is broadly in line with national expectations for their age. Two pupils are working at the expected level in English and mathematics. The others are achieving well in relation to their ability.

In Key Stages 3 and 4, standards are rising in literacy due to the good work done in partnership with the LEA to establish better strategies for developing the teaching of reading. The teachers are using their understanding of phonics to reinforce the pupils' emerging skills. The pupils read with growing confidence, although most are still achieving standards well below that expected of their ages and abilities.

In other subjects the pupils are making reasonable progress. For example, in mathematics and information and communication technology the pupils were able to complete the tasks as they were of interest and relevant to their needs. However, in a few lessons the tasks were insufficiently challenging and the pupils could have achieved more in the time available.

In geography some Key Stage 3 pupils were learning about natural disasters and they could identify the main consequences of earthquakes. However, there were missed opportunities to make this work relevant for them and as a consequence the pupils were passive in their learning. In food technology some Key Stage 3 pupils were learning about different fruits. They enjoyed the practical activities and made satisfactory progress, but the slow pace of the lesson reduced its impact.

The overall attendance rate was satisfactory at over 90 per cent in Key Stage 2, but it was unsatisfactory for pupils in Key Stage 3 and 4 at 73 per cent. This figure disguises the improvements made for many pupils, who were previously poor attenders and are now regular and punctual in school. The school continues to develop good links with the education welfare service, and has worked positively with parents to increase attendance, with some positive results for individual pupils.

The pupils' behaviour was satisfactory in four of the 11 lessons observed and good in the remaining seven. Behaviour in lessons has improved for the majority of pupils, who were able to remain in lessons and focus on their work, but a minority of pupils in Key Stage 3 and 4 were volatile and unsettled. Staff responded calmly and consistently to disruptive outbursts, but the successful resolution of challenging situations relied too much on direct personal intervention and support. This was possible, in part, because of the small number of pupils.

The quality of teaching was very good in one lesson, good in four lessons and satisfactory in seven lessons. No unsatisfactory teaching was observed. Three teachers from Key Stage 3 and 4 were absent for the inspection. The best lessons were well structured and focused systematically on developing the pupils' skills. Activities were practical and relevant and the pupils understood the tasks as a result of clear explanations and good support from teaching assistants. In the lessons where the strengths just outweighed the weaknesses, the tasks failed to motivate the pupils and the pace of learning was slow.

The headteacher continues to provide good leadership. The school is a settled community and the 23 pupils currently attending have responded very well to the change of ethos. However, there remains much to do to establish a school for the 40 pupils for whom there are places. The headteacher has been rigorous in holding staff to account for their work. He has provided supervision and coaching for the weakest staff and modelled effective teaching strategies. However, some staff have been slow to respond to the intensive support provided by the headteacher, and the LEA has only just begun to provide adequate personnel support to resolve the issues of weak teaching and support.

The LEA has supported the school by not insisting on the admission of new pupils, but it has taken too little action to ensure that suitably experienced and effective staff are appointed in line with the agreed action plan. Appropriate personnel support has only just begun. The restructuring of the school to provide a suitable curriculum, which was discussed with the LEA in December, has not progressed sufficiently and the LEA is not acting with sufficient urgency to enable the school to prepare for the 25 secondary age pupils it should have. The LEA monitoring meetings do not focus sufficiently on finding solutions to the school's current problems and progress against the action plan is not rigorously monitored.

The LEA has provided good support to improve literacy and this, together with the good leadership of the senior teacher responsible, has made a substantial contribution to the rising standards in this area.

Action taken to address the key issues

Key Issue 1: improve the leadership and management of the school

As reported above, there have been improvements in the leadership and management of the school, although there remains much to do to ensure all

members of the management team can carry out their responsibilities fully. The new deputy headteacher has been effective in changing the approaches to resolving conflicts; however, she has made insufficient progress in her role in developing the curriculum. Progress on this key issue is reasonable.

Key Issue 2: improve the quality of teaching and learning

The teachers present during the inspection have begun to embed the training they have received into their practice and, as a result, the quality of teaching has improved. However, these improvements have yet to be tested with more realistic class sizes. Progress on this key issue is reasonable.

Key Issue 3: improve the school's curriculum

A revised curriculum had been discussed between the headteacher, LEA and senior leadership team and plans were agreed. However, this work has progressed too slowly and the curriculum offered currently does not fully meet the pupils' needs. It is also wholly unsuitable for the many very difficult pupils that the LEA wants to refer to the school. Progress on this key issue is limited.

Key Issue 4: improve pupils' attitudes, relationships and behaviour

The pupils' attitudes, relationships and behaviour are reported on above. Progress on this key issue is reasonable.

Key Issue 5: provide opportunities to promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

Progress on this key issue is good. The focus on conflict resolution and repair has had a positive impact on the pupils' behaviour. There have been significant developments in inter-agency working; for example, with Connexions, the local police and a local drug action group. The school has improved the arrangements for working in partnership with child and adolescent mental health services.

There are a number of positive developments, such as work on the Key Fund, a local programme designed to develop the pupils' communication skills, which has benefited the pupils' social understanding and interaction. The physical education department has developed initiatives, such as inter-school football matches, which have enabled pupils to develop their social and personal skills, and the planned young sports leader project is building on this progress.