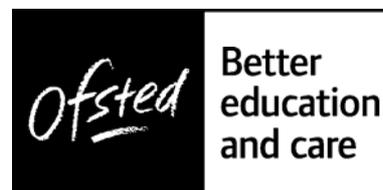


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23 December 2005

Mrs H Barraclough
Hinton St George C of E First School
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TA17 8SA

Dear Mrs Barraclough

SERIOUS WEAKNESSES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF HINTON ST GEORGE C OF E FIRST SCHOOL

Introduction

Following my visit to your school on 5 and 6 December 2005, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the first monitoring inspection since the school was found to have serious weaknesses in April 2005.

This letter will be published on the Ofsted website. Please inform the Regional Inspection Service Provider of any factual inaccuracies within 24 hours of receipt of this letter.

Evidence

I observed the school's work, scrutinised documents, and met with the headteacher and other teachers, and representatives of the governors, the local authority (LA), and the diocese.

Context

The headteacher took up her post one week before the April 2005 inspection.

Achievement and standards

Attainment on entry to Year 1 and throughout the school is above the national average but is higher in reading than in writing and mathematics. In lessons seen and work inspected the pupils' achievement was satisfactory. Pupils made satisfactory progress learning basic skills and in developing the capacity to analyse

text and solve problems. In the Foundation Stage all the children were on course to attain the Early Learning Goals and most to exceed them.

Personal development and well-being

Pupils' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are good. Pupils enjoy school. They contributed enthusiastically to lessons during whole class sessions, applying themselves diligently to tasks when working independently, and behaved sensibly in the playground at breaktimes. There is a good level of involvement in clubs and activities outside normal school time. The pupils feel safe at school and understand the basic elements of healthy living, particularly eating healthily. They engage in a number of activities which benefit the community including contributing to local charity and church events. They learn how to handle money, and work well independently and in teams. Attendance is above average and punctuality is good.

Quality of provision

Teaching is satisfactory. Lessons were planned with clear learning objectives that were fully consistent with the content of the lesson. These objectives were clearly displayed in notices near the 'carpet' areas but were not fully used in the lessons involving pupils in assessing their learning. For example objectives were not discussed in any detail at the beginning of the lesson nor referred to subsequently. Assessment of the progress of pupils relied considerably on teachers' professional intuitions. New arrangements for more systematic methods of assessment have yet to make an impact. Relationships with pupils, the management of time and the use of well understood procedures were very good. There was good support from learning assistants. Differentiated tasks were provided to meet the needs of different groups of pupils. However, pupils did not always make as much progress when working independently as when working with a teacher or learning assistant. This was partly because the levels at which the pupils could work were not always accurately gauged. The relatively few pupils with learning needs were given good support and made satisfactory progress.

The curriculum is satisfactory. The reorganised structure of the school day ensures that every class has a broad and balanced curriculum with a suitable proportion of time allocated to subjects. Planning is securely based on the Qualification and Curriculum Authority (QCA) schemes of work. Continuity and progression in each subject area are not yet secure because the newly appointed curriculum leaders have yet to make an impact. The curriculum effectively reflects the agenda for 'Every Child Matters'. Health, sex education and citizenship are fully incorporated. The needs of gifted and talented pupils are recognised through some out of school activities but not yet adequately in everyday lessons. There is a good range of extracurricular activities as well as some good opportunities to go on trips. For example, on the second day of the visit pupils were due to contribute to a concert in Wells Cathedral.

Care guidance and support are satisfactory with good elements. Personal development and care for the pupils are very good. The family atmosphere in the school ensures the children feel safe and secure. Child protection procedures are good. Teachers have recently received updated guidance on the appropriate procedures. More could be done to formalise some safety procedures to guarantee physical safety at all times. Guidance to pupils on how to improve the standard of their work lacks a secure basis because it is not supported by information about pupils' progress and because there is not yet an established set of routines for the involvement of the pupils in their own learning during lessons.

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

- reorganise the school day to ensure that sufficient time is given to all subjects—outstanding progress.

Leadership and management

The headteacher recognised the shortcomings identified at the last inspection and has worked tirelessly to address them and to focus efforts clearly on raising standards. She has a good grasp of the strengths of the school and has had considerable success in working with the staff to restructure key management processes in order to secure continuing improvement and continuity and progression in pupils' learning. Her leadership and management of change in response to the findings of the previous report are outstanding. Her strategic planning and monitoring of progress towards eliminating the weaknesses is excellent.

She has established effective procedures to monitor the school's performance and has been scrupulous in ensuring that she seeks advice to moderate her standards, particularly in respect of evaluating the quality of teaching. As a result her assessment of standards is secure and she is in a strong position to provide effective coaching to the curriculum leaders as they take a similar role within their own subjects.

She has developed an effective policy for assessment which establishes systematic procedures to monitor pupil progress. This policy has yet to have an impact although the headteacher has already demonstrated, through initial evaluation of data, how groups of pupils at risk of underachievement can be identified so that remedial action can be taken. Plans to implement the policy, including training, are good.

Curriculum leaders have been appointed for each subject and appropriate training provided for them. This gives a clear direction for management of standards in each area. The leaders of English and mathematics have both made initial plans to review the curriculum in their areas, to monitor standards, and to provide advice and support for colleagues. It is too early yet to judge the impact of this work.

The headteacher has worked well with the LA to secure improvements. Governors provide exceptionally well informed support and sensitive guidance to the headteacher and clearly understand both what needs to be done and how to achieve

it with the resources to hand. The school is well managed and runs effectively on a day to day basis.

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

- establish secure and formal procedures to monitor and evaluate the school's performance – good progress
- create strategic planning that is focused on the areas identified for improvement – outstanding progress
- develop curriculum planning that is focused clearly on the areas identified for improvement – satisfactory progress
- establish systematic procedures to monitor pupil progress – good progress
- identify subject leaders and establish clear roles for them so that they can identify strengths and weaknesses and act on this information – good progress.

External support

The statements of action by the LA are very good. They provide very clear guidance and support backed by appropriate resources. The headteacher receives considerable personal and professional support. Training provided for both the headteacher and other teachers is appropriate to help the school meet its targets. The officers involved in the action plan have provided a high level of professional service. In particular, the LA link advisor has a very accurate perception of the current needs of the school and is therefore in a good position to continue to organise well focused support.

The school has made good progress in removing the causes of its serious weaknesses.

Priorities for further improvement

- Continue to provide training and support to the curriculum leaders to enable them to meet the demands of their new roles.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the chair of governors, the Director of Education for Somerset and the Chief Education Officer for the Diocese of Bath and Wells.

Yours sincerely

John English

Additional Inspector