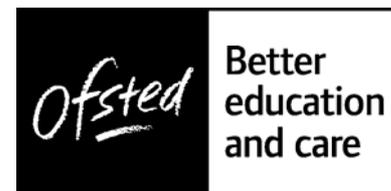


Tribal Education
1-4 Portland Square
Bristol BS2 8RR
T 0845 123 6001
F 0845 123 6002

Ofsted helpline
0845 404045
edhelpline@ofsted.gov.uk



5th December 2005

The Appropriate Authority (through the Headteacher)

Mr Paul Dyer
St Lawrence Church of England
Primary School
Trinity Road
Hurstpierpoint
West Sussex
BN6 9UY

Dear Mr Dyer

**SERIOUS WEAKNESSES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF ST LAWRENCE
CHURCH OF ENGLAND PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Introduction

Following my visit with Additional Inspectors Mrs Browning and Mr Hodge, to your school on 8 and 9 November 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 February 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

Inspectors observed sixteen lessons. They talked with pupils, observed them at play and sampled their past work. Inspectors attended two assemblies. They met with senior managers, subject and phase leaders, the vice chair of governors and a representative from the LEA. They scrutinised school documents.

Context

Five new teachers have joined school this term, two of whom are newly qualified teachers. The deputy headteacher has been released from class teaching, and now spends the equivalent of three days per week supporting learning and teaching

across the school and the induction of new staff. She is also working on a daily basis with pupils in Year 6, to help raise standards there.

Achievement and standards

Test results at age seven and eleven in 2005 were much better than those of 2004. The proportion of pupils attaining both the expected and higher levels was above the national average. The results in 2005 represent satisfactory achievement over time for these pupils, and standards that are more representative of pupils' capabilities than the results in 2004.

The school's data shows that pupils in the current Year 2 classes are not expected to attain standards that are quite as high as test results last year. Data on Year 6 shows that this is a stronger cohort than last year. However, standards are currently significantly lower than the school's targets for 2006, which are based on pupils' previous attainment. Nevertheless, evidence from teaching and from the work sampled, shows that pupils and teachers are working very hard to meet the end-of-year targets. Booster classes, and additional teaching and support, have also been provided in Year 6 to help raise standards.

The school's data clearly shows that pupils' progress has been inconsistent in the past. Senior managers are using assessment information to monitor pupils' year on year progress more closely, and to set individual progress targets for pupils in every class. In lessons, children in the Foundation Stage achieve well, as was the case at the last inspection. Elsewhere pupils achieve satisfactorily, and standards in English, mathematics and science are beginning to improve.

In lessons and in discussions, pupils throughout the school speak confidently and most pupils listen well. Reading standards are in line with those expected. Writing standards although improved, are still below national expectations and the school is working effectively to improve them. Pupils in Years 1 and 2, have a secure knowledge of number and mathematics. There is clear evidence of higher attainment among some pupils. For example, in Year 2 some pupils are already confident in working with numbers up to and beyond one hundred. In Years 3 to 5 standards in mathematics are gradually improving. Pupils' achievement in science is now satisfactory. Improvements in provision and assessment are beginning to have a positive impact on improving pupils' skills in scientific enquiry.

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

- Continue to raise achievement in English, mathematics and science: satisfactory progress.

Personal development and well-being

This aspect was judged an area of strength in the last inspection and continues to be promoted well. Attendance levels are above those nationally. Pupils show

interest in class and are keen to participate. They behave well and often work hard, particularly when teaching is good. In assembly, pupils were very interested and respectful and they listened and participated well. Relationships between pupils and with staff are very good. Pupils are polite, friendly and confident to talk with staff and visitors. In conversation pupils say they enjoy school and pupils were seen playing happily together at breaktimes. Pupils have the opportunity to formally express their views, for example through the school council and through pupil questionnaires.

Quality of provision

A satisfactory start has been made to addressing weaknesses in teaching. Teaching and learning was at least satisfactory in 15 out of 16 lessons seen, it was good in eight lessons and inadequate in one lesson. The overall quality of teaching is broadly similar to that noted in the last inspection, but it does not match the school's most recent evaluation that teaching and learning are good.

Teaching and learning in the Foundation Stage continues to be good. Staff here have a good understanding of how young children learn best. Children therefore are given a good start to their education. Although staffing is now more stable, with less absence and disruption, there remain some inconsistencies and weaknesses in the quality of teaching in Years 1 to 6.

Good generic features of teaching are evident. For example, teachers in all classes enjoy good relationships with pupils, who like their teachers. Learning intentions are clear and are shared consistently with pupils. Teachers often choose interesting activities and appropriately link subjects together, to make pupils' learning more relevant. Literacy and numeracy lessons take good account of national guidance, and teachers use information and communication technology and whiteboards well. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities are supported appropriately by teachers and the support staff.

In the English lessons seen, teaching was almost always good. Planning is comprehensive and well matched to pupils' different abilities. Teachers' good questioning ensured good learning. In mathematics and science lessons, teaching and learning was rarely better than satisfactory and was inadequate in one lesson. In Year 6, good mathematics teaching and learning is evident from pupils' work. Here, teachers set challenging work for pupils of all capabilities. They have good knowledge of the subject, of pupils' current attainment levels and where there are gaps in pupils' knowledge. In lessons and from the scrutiny of science work it is evident that better attention is now being given to scientific enquiry than was the case at the time of the last inspection. Nevertheless, teachers' marking of work is superficial and there is still too little evidence of pupils developing and using their own methods of recording.

The quantity of work pupils produce in lessons and over time in mathematics and science is a cause for some concern. This limits opportunities for pupils to learn through practice of written examples and to make progress that is better than

satisfactory. Senior managers are aware that they need to raise teachers' expectations further. Low expectations were evident during a few lessons: teachers sometimes praised pupils for working hard when at least some of them could have been made to work harder. The quality of pupils' work in their topic workbooks reflects a greater emphasis on presentation. Scrutiny of other books, however, revealed some acceptance of untidy work and sometimes too much praise given for average or satisfactory work.

Teaching assistants are skilled, but are not always used to full advantage to support pupils' learning. For example in mathematics lessons in Year 1, when leading activities during group work, teaching assistants made a good contribution to pupils' learning. However, during the mental mathematics introduction and the review session at the end of the lesson, teaching assistants largely worked on organisational tasks, rather than supporting those pupils who were experiencing difficulty with their learning, or with staying on task.

The collation and use of assessment data has improved. Senior managers are working to ensure that all staff are increasingly aware of how to use this information to challenge pupils' and raise standards. They are aware that day-to-day assessment is not yet used consistently in all classes to ensure that teachers' planning takes account of the needs of pupils of different capabilities.

Despite introducing a revised marking policy, the school still has some scope to improve the quality of marking and ensure consistency across classes. Marking of work is regular, but is not often developmental. This limits the guidance given to pupils about how to improve their work. All pupils have English and mathematics targets and some are involved in setting them. Discussions with pupils show they are clear about their targets in English but less clear about their mathematics targets.

A satisfactory curriculum with strengths in extra curricular provision and in the Foundation Stage, has been maintained since the last inspection.

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

- Resolve staffing issues and raise expectations about pupils' potential, providing all pupils with a consistent and appropriate level of challenge: satisfactory progress.

Leadership and management

The headteacher, supported by the deputy headteacher and senior staff, has implemented the school's action plan satisfactorily. Along with good external support, this has provided a clear focus for improvement. The appointment of several new teachers this term has helped to provide more stability in staffing. New management structures and procedures are being established. For example, a more systematic approach to assessment throughout the school is beginning to provide a clearer view of pupils' progress and the gaps in pupils' learning. The deputy without

class teaching responsibility supports the headteacher effectively. Her focus on teaching small groups and supporting colleagues new to teaching is helping to make improvements. Senior managers and staff responsible for key subjects and age ranges within the school, are benefiting from leadership and management training and support. Key subject leaders are now providing a regular overview of development in their subjects.

The headteacher and deputy have monitored teaching, planning, assessment data and undertaken work scrutiny while monitoring the progress of the action plan. This does not necessarily always lead to a clear or realistic evaluation of the impact of the actions taken. Furthermore, the school's judgement that its effectiveness is good, as is outlined in its school self-evaluation document, does not reflect a realistic view of the school's current position. This constrains the school's ability to plan for continued improvement.

The governors give satisfactory support to the school. They have received good external guidance. They have been involved fully in the improvement process through their sub committee structures such as the performance and standards committee.

The school's action plan is satisfactory. Some minor areas have been improved in the light of the LEA's commentary and it now gives clearer guidance about the activities needed to improve each priority for development. Actions are manageable with those staff responsible clearly identified. The ways of measuring success and progress are clear.

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

- Use the wide-ranging data more effectively and realistically, to make the improvements sustainable: satisfactory progress.

External support

The LEA has given the school good, effective support. Its statement of action is good. It is thorough, supportive and manageable. It gives a clear outline of how it intends to support the school using consultant headteachers, subject advisers and advanced skills teachers. The LEA's commentary gives a clear commitment to the school's future and the ability of the school to improve. Its comments on the school's action plan are helpful and point to where there are weaknesses. The support and monitoring arrangements are outlined clearly.

Main Judgements

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

Priorities for further improvement

In addition to the areas outlined in its action plan, senior managers should:

- Develop the quality of the school's self-evaluation to help assess improvement more realistically.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the Chair of Governors, The Director of Education for West Sussex and The Diocesan Board of Chichester.

Yours sincerely,

Kathryn Taylor
Additional Inspector