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Mr D Lawrence
The Headteacher
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21 March 2006

Dear Mr Lawrence

SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF KINGSLAND CE (C) PRIMARY SCHOOL

Introduction

Following my visit with Colin Humphreys HMI and Robina Tomes, Additional Inspector, to your school on 8 and 9 March 2006, 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 became subject to special measures in October 2005.

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

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents, and met with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, a group of teachers with specific responsibilities, the chair of governors and a representative from the local authority (LA).

Context

There have been no significant changes in the school's context since the inspection of October 2005.

Achievement and standards

The results of the 2005 national tests confirm the findings of the last inspection. The standards achieved by pupils at the end of Key Stage 1 were broadly average in reading and mathematics but exceptionally low in writing. The progress made by pupils during Key Stage 2 was amongst the lowest in the country. Consequently standards dropped alarmingly and were exceptionally low in English, mathematics and science. Standards in English were close to the lowest nationally.

Current Year 6 pupils are achieving higher standards than the 2005 cohort but remain below average. Standards in other year groups are below average. Progress observed in lessons across all age groups was variable and ranged from good to inadequate. Progress in six out of fourteen lessons seen was inadequate. Overall the progress made by pupils is inadequate.

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

- improve pupils' achievement, especially that of the more able pupils and those with learning difficulties and disabilities, by ensuring that teaching and the curriculum meet their needs—inadequate progress.

Personal development and well-being

Most pupils have good attitudes to school and behave well. They are courteous and polite to adults and keen to welcome visitors. In class, behaviour is generally appropriate even after a period of wet playtimes. In the few classes where teaching is well planned and effective, pupils are motivated, keen to learn, and persevere with their work. In lessons where work is less well matched to pupils needs, pupils are less focused and consequently make less progress.

The school has taken steps to improve attendance, including targeting those pupils with particularly low attendance, giving certificates for the best class attendance and prizes for the pupil with full attendance. However, these innovations have only been recently introduced and have not yet had time to make an impact. There has therefore been little improvement overall in attendance which remains at the previous low and unsatisfactory level.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning are inadequate overall. They were good in only two of the 14 lessons, satisfactory in six, and inadequate in the remaining six, making the proportion of inadequate teaching far too high. Good teaching was observed in a Year 3 class and a mixed Years 1 and 2 class and is the result of the work of effective individuals rather than the product of a coherent whole school approach to teaching and learning. In the best lessons the teachers' expectations were high. Teachers used obvious strategies for

stretching the pupils' thinking and the work set was well matched to the needs of different groups of pupils. For example, in a Year 3 literacy lesson, the teacher used effective resources to help pupils structure their extended writing and to broaden their vocabulary. The pupils understood what they needed to do to produce good work and this captured their enthusiasm for the task. There needs to be more good teaching if the pupils are to achieve higher standards but, at the moment, too many underachieve.

In the inadequate lessons there were a number of consistent weaknesses. Teachers often talked for longer than the pupils could concentrate, the work set was the same for all pupils and was too easy for the higher attainers and sometimes too difficult for the lower attainers. At times teachers were not sufficiently aware that some of the pupils were not making progress and gave their attention to those who offered answers to questions. The work of the teaching assistants was inadequate overall. Although some made an effective contribution to the pupils' learning, in too many cases the teaching assistants' role was not sufficiently clear, for example some had nothing to do during the first part of the lesson.

The staff have worked hard to ensure that classroom displays support learning but there is too little celebration of pupils' work especially writing.

The curriculum remains weak. The school rightly gives high priority to the teaching of English and mathematics. An integrated curricular approach for some other subjects is being used to make learning more exciting and the concept of this has much to commend it. However, such an approach requires more skilful teaching than the school currently demonstrates in order to be successful and there is too little evidence of good standards being achieved in, for example, geography and history. The school needs to reflect on how it is going to improve standards in the foundation subjects.

There are weaknesses in planning, particularly short term planning. The use of the 'star planning' system whereby two lessons are prepared in detail is not an adequate approach for a school in special measures and the planning is not sufficiently detailed. Some teachers do not, for instance, identify how the work is to be differentiated to meet the needs of different pupils or what extension activities will be available for the higher attainers. Planning does not always make clear how the lesson will promote good progress. The use of the 'must, should and could' approach is not always effective and is failing to secure the improvement in standards and progress.

The LA have worked together with the school to plan updated provision and procedures for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities. However these are only now being put in place and therefore have had little impact on progress. Currently smart targets for most pupils with learning disabilities or difficulties are not in place, neither are ongoing assessment procedures. These pupils continue to lack effective guidance. The Code of Practice needs

to be implemented consistently, including the required parental reviews of pupils at the school action plus stage.

A catch up programme of support is planned to support those pupils in most need. However the school lacks an effective programme of earlier intervention. A half termly assessment profile for targeting and tracking pupils' progress was introduced at the end of the autumn term. This enables staff to focus support on those pupils who are not progressing as well as they should. Marking in most classes is effective in enabling pupils to become aware what they can do but they are not yet aware of how they can improve.

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

- improve pupils' achievement, especially that of the more able pupils and those with learning difficulties and disabilities, by ensuring that teaching and the curriculum meet their needs—inadequate progress.

Leadership and management

The school improvement plan was revised following the inspection in October 2005. Planning includes action to deal with the areas for improvement but is not clear or precise about the impact expected from the strategies introduced. The school has yet to work out the exact timescales and success criteria for all targets against which improvements are expected. Consequently the school is unable to show the progress made against areas for improvement.

Some new initiatives have made a good start and have been successful in involving a large number of parents in supporting their children's learning. However, the leadership of the school is not acting with sufficient urgency to bring about the necessary improvements. Initiatives designed to improve attendance have only just been introduced. Individual educational plans for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities were not completed until recently. Consequently the pupils needing the greatest help have not received the support, adapted to their specific needs, to which they are entitled. The expectations on teachers from senior staff on lesson planning are too low. There has been guidance to teachers on delivering high quality teaching and learning but this has not been consistently acted upon.

The governors realise they need to improve their monitoring of the school's progress but are uncertain how to go about it. Link governors have been established to monitor specific aspects of the school's work. The lack of a clear improvement plan, with key milestones, makes it difficult for the governors to monitor progress against the areas for improvement. The chair of governors has asked the LA for training and support in this important aspect of their work.

Monitoring procedures have been established but are in the early stages of development. As yet they have not brought about the necessary

improvements. Subject coordinators are still developing their leadership and management roles. The headteacher's evaluation of the quality of teaching and learning agreed with that of inspectors.

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

- improve pupils' achievement, especially that of the more able pupils and those with learning difficulties and disabilities, by ensuring that teaching and the curriculum meet their needs—inadequate progress
- ensure that there is more rigorous monitoring of the school's work, especially teaching, to identify and tackle problems at an earlier stage—satisfactory progress.

External support

The LA's statement of action sets out the extra support it will provide to the school. The statement draws explicit links to the school's action plan and timelines. However, the school's plan is inadequate because it specifies activity without a clear assessment of the likely impact and does not identify measurable outcomes at key points along a timeline. Taken together the statement and plan are not sufficiently precise for governors and the LA to monitor the progress the school is making on the areas for improvement. Therefore the LA's statement of action is inadequate because it cannot bring about the necessary improvements within the required timescale.

Main Judgements

Progress since being subject to special measures—inadequate.

Quality of LA's statement of action—inadequate.

The LA should address the weaknesses identified and prepare amendments by the second monitoring inspection.

Newly qualified teachers may be appointed.

Priorities for further improvement

- Develop a plan which clearly shows how progress against the areas for improvement will unfold.
- Ensure all teachers have lesson plans for every lesson they teach.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning by:
 - ensuring there is a common understanding of what constitutes good teaching and learning
 - conducting more incisive monitoring that gives teachers guidance on how to improve.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the chair of governors and the Director of Education for Stoke LA.

Yours sincerely

David Anstead
H M Inspector