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Mr A Bridewell
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Dear Mr Bridewell

SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF LUDGERSHALL CASTLE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Introduction

Following my visit with Pat Lowe, Additional Inspector, to your school on 27 and 28 September, 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 May 2006.

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, the school's curriculum and assessment team, the advisory headteacher from the local authority (LA), the chair of governors, a group of Year 6 pupils and a group of parents.

Context

Three new experienced full time teachers were appointed to the school from the start of September. There is a new senior leadership team consisting of the headteacher, deputy headteacher and assistant headteacher. The new

curriculum and assessment team is formed of representatives from each key stage.

Achievement and standards

The results of the 2006 National Curriculum assessments for pupils in Year 2 showed significant improvement over previous years in the proportions of pupils achieving the expected Level 2b and above. There remains underachievement amongst higher attaining pupils, with too few achieving Level 3c and above in all three subjects. Improvement in reading and writing was slightly stronger than in mathematics. Standards are now broadly average and this is supported by work seen in lessons. There are now significant strengths in the teaching of key skills, particularly in writing and numeracy which contribute to pupils making much better progress.

The results of the 2006 National Curriculum tests for Year 6 showed an improvement over the previous year in particular. The most significant improvement was in English, especially in the proportion of pupils who achieved Level 5c and above. Standards in science rose and, along with those in English, have improved from well below average to below average. Lesson observations show continuing improvement in writing and above average standards in speaking and listening. Although the proportion of pupils achieving Level 4 and above in mathematics rose, standards are still exceptionally low and there is significant underachievement. The school's own data shows that in the current Year 6 only 50% of the pupils have made the expected progress in mathematics.

Evidence from lessons shows that in the early part of Key Stage 2 there is significant underachievement in reading. This is because the teaching of guided reading is inadequate. Key skills are not taught successfully and teachers are not assessing the progress pupils make in sufficient depth or detail.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in May 2006:

- accelerate improvements to the quality of teaching so that all pupils achieve better and make consistently good progress in English, mathematics and science – inadequate.

Personal development and well-being

There was a significant improvement in pupils' attendance in the summer term, with rates very close to the national average. The rate of attendance so far this term is good. The school has received good support from the education welfare officer. In addition, through rewarding pupils' good attendance using certificates, parents and pupils are now much more aware of the importance of attending school regularly.

In lessons where teaching is good, pupils' behaviour is very good and often exemplary. Parents and pupils feel that behaviour in the school is now much better and there is much improvement. As one pupil in Year 6 said, 'We can show our skills in Year 6, we have made good progress.' One parent summed up the improvement by saying, 'Children are so much happier in school now – they smile!' There are no concerns regarding bullying. In the best lessons, pupils are enthusiastic and enjoy learning. They show very good concentration and application. A significant strength is the pride and care they take in their written work. Pupils are very aware of the importance of healthy eating and besiege their parents with advice on healthy choices.

Where teaching is inadequate, pupils' personal organisation is weak. In one lesson four pupils had not started their work until after eight minutes had elapsed. They could not find the pencils or books they needed.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in May 2006:

- raise the level of pupils' attendance – good.

Quality of provision

Teaching is satisfactory. A significant proportion of teaching is good. The main weakness is in the teaching of guided reading. The proportion of good teaching has increased since the last inspection but the improvements have been too recent to enable all pupils to achieve better and make consistently good progress in English and mathematics. Where teaching is good, teachers plan their lessons well, build on what pupils already know and can do, and have a good understanding of individual needs. Where lessons are inadequate, planning is weak, tasks are not matched to pupils' abilities and needs, levels of concentration are poor, and pupils do not apply themselves diligently to the work in hand. In guided reading, key skills are not developed successfully. As a result, pupils do not make adequate progress.

Teaching assistants give effective support in literacy and numeracy to those who find learning difficult.

Assessment procedures for checking how well pupils are achieving in English and mathematics are good for the current Year 6. However, across the school, although assessment is improving it is still not sufficiently frequent or accurate to enable teachers to ensure that pupils make sufficient progress to reach the national standards appropriate for their age. Procedures for assessing how well pupils in other year groups achieve in English and mathematics are at an early stage of development. There are some examples of good marking to help pupils to improve but practice is inconsistent. Parents and carers are not sufficiently involved in pupils' learning, especially in knowing how well their children are doing. Monitoring of lessons has improved but is not sufficiently rigorous in providing teachers with the necessary information on standards to enable them to raise pupils'

achievement. Homework is used satisfactorily to support learning.

The curriculum is satisfactory. It gives priority to the development of pupils' literacy and numeracy skills. However, there is a weakness in the planning of guided reading, especially for the development of key reading skills. Teachers are beginning to develop planned links across the curriculum to enable pupils to use and further develop these skills in other subjects. The curriculum makes a good contribution to pupils' safe and healthy lifestyles. There is good enrichment of the curriculum through school clubs, visits, visitors, community involvement, productions and themed events, which contribute to pupils' achievement and enjoyment, and prepare pupils well for future learning and well-being. Spanish is taught in Reception, Years 1 and 2. The teaching of French in Years 3 to 6 culminates in a residential visit to France which is much enjoyed by pupils in Year 6. The school recognises the need to further develop its curriculum if it is to succeed in its intention of raising the achievement of all pupils.

Care, guidance and support are satisfactory. Pastoral care is good and contributes to pupils' well-being. Careful attention is paid to child protection and health and safety issues. Procedures for safeguarding learners, according to government requirements, are in place. Induction and transfer arrangements are good and help pupils to settle happily into new routines. The school has good links with a range of local agencies that safeguard the needs of the most vulnerable pupils, including those with learning difficulties. The impact on pupils' academic progress is satisfactory and is improving. There are early encouraging signs that pupils know their targets. In Year 6, pupils say that marking and oral feedback from teachers are helping them to understand what they need to do in order to improve their work.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in May 2006:

- accelerate improvements to the quality of teaching so that all pupils achieve better and make consistently good progress in English, mathematics and science – satisfactory
- improve assessment and establish tracking of pupils' achievements to make sure that teachers have the information to plan work at the right level – satisfactory.

Leadership and management

Parents, pupils and the LA recognise that the headteacher has created an environment where there is now a distinct and recognisable Castle School ethos. The central aim of this ethos is to raise standards. Discussions with the headteacher, senior leadership team and curriculum and assessment team confirm the focus on 'We can and must do better'. The school improvement plan is focused closely on raising achievement. A significant improvement in leadership and management is that the school has started to use information and communication technology (ICT) to monitor and track pupils' progress. In

the current Year 6, it now identifies accurately where pupils are in their learning, especially those who are underachieving. Tracking in this way has thrown up the significant underachievement in mathematics. Further analysis has shown that a key weakness is that pupils are not successful in solving word problems in assessments and tests. Now that the school has this data for Year 6 and imminently for the other year groups, it is well set to put in place strategies to support underachieving pupils.

The headteacher, senior leadership team and governors are much more rigorous in monitoring teaching and learning. However, in lesson observations there is insufficient rigour in identifying the standards pupils achieve. Improved leadership and management have contributed to the significant increase in the amount of good teaching seen and in the rapidly improving assessment of pupils' learning. There is recognition that until these are consistently good then pupils will not make the progress of which they are capable.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in May 2006

- strengthen the leadership and management skills of the senior team to increase the capacity for improvement – satisfactory.

External support

The quality of support from the LA has been good, especially from the advisory headteacher who has been working closely with the school. Her regular visits are highly focused and keep the senior leadership team concentrating on addressing the four key issues from the inspection. Staffing changes within the LA advisory team have meant there has been inconsistent support.

Main Judgements

Progress since being subject to special measures – satisfactory.

The local authority's statement of action to support the school is good.

Newly qualified teachers may not be appointed.

Priorities for further improvement

The school should maintain its focus on the four key areas for improvement from the inspection report, but within those, give a stronger emphasis to:

- improving the teaching of, and assessment of, guided reading
- raising pupils' achievement in mathematics
- judging standards pupils achieve when monitoring lessons.

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

Yours sincerely

David Curtis
Additional Inspector