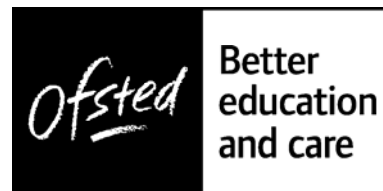


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Ms Nicky Poore
Glascote Heath Primary School
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8 March 2006

Dear Ms Poore

SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF GLASCOTE HEATH PRIMARY SCHOOL

Introduction

Following my visit with Anne Orton HMI and Krishan Sharma, Additional Inspector, to your school on 8 and 9 February 2006, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the second monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures in March 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 a wide range of documents, and met with staff, governors and a representative of the local authority. Lessons were observed and inspectors talked with pupils and looked at samples of their work.

Context

The school has made several changes to staffing arrangements since the last visit. An acting deputy headteacher has been appointed to cover the absence of a colleague and several changes to senior teacher responsibilities have been made. During the inspection staff and pupils in Year 6 were on a residential school visit, along with key members of staff.

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards remain inadequate overall although there are signs of improvement in some areas, notably English. The published results of the 2005 national tests for 11 year olds in English, mathematics and science show standards in all subjects are below average and have been in decline over the last three years. This is not the case for pupils at age seven where standards are close to expectations, although here too standards have gradually deteriorated since 2003. The progress pupils make between age seven and eleven is well below average in these subjects. The progress of pupils in mathematics was slightly better than in English. A sample of work at age seven shows a lack of progress in writing and girls make slower progress than boys overall.

However, a scrutiny of work in the current Year 6 and lesson observations in other classes show that progress is being made. In particular, literacy in Years 3 to 6 is improving as a result of the increased emphasis on regular assessment. Pupils in Year 6 are able to identify what level they are working at and what they need to do to improve.

Standards of speaking and listening are improving rapidly as a result of teachers providing more opportunities for pupils to speak with each other but pupils' written work remains inadequate. There is not enough opportunity for pupils to write for extended periods and as a result the presentation of written work and spelling skills are below average. Sentence construction is improving but remains weak.

In mathematics standards are improving gradually but remain inadequate overall. Areas of improvement include better understanding of percentages and fractions. Year 6 pupils can use spreadsheets to calculate averages and most pupils are able to use simple number work accurately in word problems. Despite this, knowledge of multiplication facts remains weak throughout the school.

The school has correctly identified scientific enquiry as an area to develop. Year 2 pupils showed a good understanding of magnetism and were able to work with each other in practical investigations but these opportunities remain inconsistent.

The school had originally set targets for the Year 6 pupils in 2006 that were below national averages and progress was also a cause for concern. However after a recent review the school has set far more ambitious targets for 2006.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in March 2005

- improve teaching and learning and combat underachievement in Years 3 to 6—satisfactory progress.

Personal development and well-being

Pupils' personal development is good. Pupils like being at school and feel safe in the knowledge that they will be able to approach an adult if they are worried. Behaviour is now good and has improved considerably as a result of the school's common approach to behaviour management. The school's expectations regarding behaviour are well known to pupils and their parents. Pupils are making good progress in developing their personal and social skills overall and, as a result, pupils get on well with each other. In lessons they are often asked to work with a partner and manage this very well. Pupils have a sound understanding of cultures other than their own and the Chinese New Year was a recent focus. Moral development is good and was evident in one assembly when pupils discussed better ways of responding to frustration and anger.

The school provides a safe environment for its pupils throughout the day. Bullying is rare and, when it occurs, it is taken seriously and dealt with firmly. Child protection procedures are secure. The induction arrangements for the very youngest children are good and help children to settle quickly. The support for pupils with learning difficulties and additional needs is good and enables these pupils to make satisfactory progress. The monitoring of other pupils' progress is patchy overall. It is improving, particularly in English and mathematics, because targets are being set, although they are not always clearly understood by pupils.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in March 2005

- implement effective strategies for improving the behaviour of a minority of pupils—good progress.

Quality of provision

Provision is improving rapidly and is now satisfactory in most subjects. In the lessons observed there was no inadequate teaching. A majority of teaching was satisfactory but some was good. The main features that resulted in teaching being judged satisfactory rather than better were a lack of progress made by pupils in the main part of the lesson, low expectation by teachers of what pupils were capable of achieving and examples of pupils being unsure about what they were expected to learn during the session. This remains the root cause of pupils' underachievement.

In the better lessons teachers made good use of timings to maintain pace, used interactive whiteboards effectively to engage pupils' interest, and had good relationships with their pupils. In one good example pupils were encouraged to discuss strategies for solving conflict with others using role play and discussion.

The revised curriculum planning is good. The school now provides a more suitable curriculum for pupils although some areas of weakness remain.

Information and communication technology (ICT) is now close to meeting statutory requirements as a result of recent and rapid improvements due to the effective work of the acting subject leader. For example, the use of ICT to support teaching has grown considerably throughout the school and helps teachers explain ideas and maintain pupils' enthusiasm.

The more successful lessons are well planned to match pupils' differing needs and abilities and teachers' intentions are clear. Pupils enthusiastically engage with the tasks set. Behaviour in these lessons is invariably good because pupils are motivated to give their best. In the satisfactory lessons there are some common weaknesses. Often teacher introductions are overly long and leave little time for pupils to engage with the main activity on their own. As a consequence the quality and quantity of the work produced suffers. At times the work is not demanding enough, particularly during the development phase of the lesson. Teacher assistants provide good support to groups or individual pupils but they are under utilised during the introductory part of lessons in some classes. The teaching is often good in the Reception classes and, as a result, children progress well. Staff have a sound understanding of the curriculum for the youngest children.

Arrangements for assessment are satisfactory. Reception staff regularly record information on the youngest children's experiences and achievement. In the rest of the school the systems have improved and assessment information is collected but not yet consistently used to support learning. This information is slowly improving standards. The school has effective procedures to identify and provide for the need of pupils with learning difficulties.

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

- provide a suitably enriched curriculum that motivates and inspires pupils to learn and encourage them to show initiative—satisfactory progress
- ensure that provision in ICT meets statutory requirements—inadequate progress
- use assessment information to meet pupils' needs and check on their progress—satisfactory progress.

Leadership and management

The leadership and management of the school has changed considerably since the last monitoring visit. These changes have continued the progress being made and strengthened the capacity to improve. The current senior management team meet regularly and are increasingly effective in taking steps to raise standards. The headteacher continues to drive change and improvement with energy and determination and is increasingly supported by colleagues. She has an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses and takes decisive and quick action to make changes.

Governors are more involved than previously and report that they are much more aware of progress being made. Subject governors now meet regularly

with teachers to check progress. The governing body has been strengthened by the addition of a governor with experience of education and they are increasingly holding the school to account for its performance. The governors are very supportive of the school and are well placed to now increase the level of challenge to the school.

Subject leaders are also developing their role. The lack of information available to some means they are less effective in monitoring the quality of teaching and standards. The leaders monitor standards with increasing accuracy, contribute to school planning, and most know the strengths and weaknesses in their subjects well. This is not yet true of all however and this improvement is not yet consistent. The monitoring of teaching is increasingly rigorous but needs to be more closely linked to raising standards. As a result, although the current leadership and management of the school is very effective, progress overall remains satisfactory.

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

- improve the quality and effectiveness of leadership and management—satisfactory progress
- clearly define the roles and responsibilities within the senior management team and add these to the school improvement plan—satisfactory progress.

External support

The school has received good support from the local authority and this has helped improve progress. However, the impact of this support on standards remains at an early stage.

Main Judgements

Progress since being subject to special measures—satisfactory.

Priorities for further improvement

- When monitoring lessons, look more closely at the progress of pupils' learning.
- Identify the pupils' learning needs more precisely.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the chair of governors, and the Director of Children and Lifelong Learning for Staffordshire.

Yours sincerely

Ceri Morgan
H M Inspector