

UPDATE ON OFSTED SCHOOL INSPECTIONS SINCE SEPTEMBER 2003

Report By: Head of Inspection, Advice and School
Performance Service

Wards Affected

Countywide

Purpose

1. To up-date the Committee on the outcomes of Ofsted School Inspections since 1 September 2003, and in particular those inspections for which reports have been published since the end of the school year 2003 –2004.

Financial Implications

2. None

Report

3. This report is a continuation of the report presented to Committee on 5 April 2004 (Agenda Item 8). The reports on the following schools have now been published and Appendix 1 contains the summary paragraphs that give an overall evaluation of each school.

Barrs Court Special
Blackmarston Special School
Bredenbury Primary School
John Kyrle High School
Lea CE Primary School
St Mary's of Hope CE Primary School
Weobley High School
Westfield Special School

4. Where Committee members have a particular interest in a school, it is advisable to read the complete summary report, or full report which can be obtained directly from the individual school or via the Herefordshire Education web-site education@herefordshire.gov.uk or the Ofsted web-site www.ofsted.gov.uk.
5. During the 2003 – 2004 academic year Ofsted inspected a total of 14 Herefordshire Schools, including 7 primary, 3 special and 4 high schools. This is a smaller number than in previous years being a 13% sample of all schools. The sample contained 8% of primaries, 75% of special schools and 28% of Secondary Schools.

6. Overall, the evidence emerging from these Ofsted inspections supports the notion that Herefordshire has a successful and robust education system in which pupils receive a good quality of education. It is, however, very disappointing that one school, Weobley High School, was placed in special measures, the first school to be placed in this category for over two years
7. A new and much more challenging inspection regime was introduced by Ofsted in September 2003 and this has led to a sharp increase nationally in the number of schools being placed in special measures. The inspection process is being revised again for September 2005. It is abundantly clear that any school that cannot demonstrate consistently high standards of teaching, an improving examination performance and positive value added is vulnerable to being placed in special measures.
8. The Inspection, Advice and School Performance (IASPS) is working very hard with all schools, particularly those that are likely to receive an inspection within the next year, to ensure that headteachers, staff and governors are fully aware of the inspection standards now required.
9. Herefordshire has a good record for having had very few schools in special measures since 1998 and for the speed in which such schools have improved. The 2004 – 2005 academic year and beyond presents the County with a continuing challenge that this record is both maintained and improved.

RECOMMENDATION

THAT the Committee are asked to note the report.

Background Papers

- None identified.

APPENDIX 1**BARRS COURT SCHOOL (56 pupils, January, 2004)**

Barrs Court School is a good and improving school with many very good features. The very effective leadership of the new headteacher is having a significant impact on improving the quality of education and in clearly defining the role of the school. There are a number of barriers to raising pupils' achievement, particularly related to accommodation, which are being addressed through substantial remodelling of the building and which are significantly mitigated, although not entirely overcome, by the high quality of teaching. This ensures good learning and, as a result, pupils and students achieve well. The school is providing good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The quality of leadership by the headteacher is providing inspiration for the staff.
- The very effective senior management team translates vision into secure planning and implementation.
- Teachers' assessment and planning, including the very effective use of support staff, underpin pupils' learning very well.
- Arrangements to include all pupils ensure that pupils of all abilities have equal access to the curriculum.
- Relationships, based on mutual respect, are excellent.
- The school promotes pupils' personal development and independence skills very well.
- Support and guidance, including advice on courses and careers, is very effective.
- Planning for the use of information and communication technology (ICT) across the curriculum is insufficient to support learning and develop pupils' skills.
- In spite of improvements, accommodation is unsatisfactory and constitutes a barrier to learning.

The extent of the school's improvement is good. Pupils are now making better progress because the curriculum and its assessment have been significantly improved so that work is carefully planned to meet their individual needs. The progress made in dealing with the key issues from the previous inspection has been good overall, although much of the progress has been recent. In addition to curriculum and assessment, particularly strong improvement has taken place in school improvement planning and in the way leadership and management promote the professional development of staff.

BLACKMARSTON SCHOOL (48 pupils, January, 2004)

This is an effective school. Pupils, in relation to their previous learning, achieve well. This is because their needs are very well identified, relevant targets are set and because teaching is good. The curriculum at each stage of education is very relevant. The level of care and welfare is extremely well organised and supports the needs of all pupils. The school has a very good ethos for learning, and ensures that all pupils have the maximum opportunities to make progress. The school provides good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The school is very well led and managed by the headteacher and the senior management team.
- All pupils achieve well, especially in communication and personal development.
- The children in the Early Years and Foundation Stage are provided with a very good start to education, and the needs of autistic pupils in the newly established class are met very well.
- The curriculum is very relevant for all pupils, and is well taught by teachers with a high level of expertise.
- Very good links have been forged with parents, other schools, and the community
- Subject leaders do not manage their subjects well enough to provide them with an overview of the quality of the provision.
- There is insufficient recording of the progress that pupils make in some subjects of the curriculum.
- Some of the classes have too many pupils in them for the needs and difficulties of the pupils and the space available, and there are some safety issues arising from the combination of a soft play room within a storage area.

The key issue from the last inspection has been addressed, and the school is now much more effective than it was at that time. The curriculum is better, assessment, and the targets in pupils' individual education plans are improved. There are more effective links with mainstream schools under the inclusion programme. The level of support for medical needs and for communication is much better. The school has risen well to the challenge of meeting the greater needs of pupils.

BREDENBURY PRIMARY SCHOOL (56 pupils, January, 2004)

The overall effectiveness of the school is good. Bredenbury is a very caring school, highly valued by pupils and parents, where teaching and learning are good. Pupil's attitudes, behaviour and achievement are good; relationships are very good. Standards in year 6 National Curriculum tests were very low in 2003 compared with schools nationally; in particular due to the numbers of pupils with learning difficulties joining the school in years 4 and 5. The leadership of the headteacher is good. The leadership of other key staff, the overall management of the school and governance are satisfactory. Costs per pupil are high because of the size of the school; nevertheless, it provides satisfactory value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are;

- Good care, welfare and support are provided for pupils and the school has a very strong partnership with parents.
- Pupils' good behaviour, attitudes and very good relationships enhance their learning.
- The headteacher has insufficient time and support to fulfil management responsibilities.
- Achievement is good; pupils with special educational needs (SEN) achieve well, due to good support and teaching.
- Assessment is not used consistently or effectively to improve pupils' progress in Years 3–6.
- School self-evaluation procedures are not sufficiently effective in improving teachers' performance or pupils' progress.
- Standards in mathematics in Years 3–6 are below average.
- Most pupils use information and communications technology (ICT) skilfully and confidently.

How the effectiveness of the school has changed since last inspection.

Overall, improvement since the 1998 inspection is satisfactory. The school has addressed the key issue in the last report concerning school development planning. The following were satisfactory in the previous inspection and are now good; pupils' attitudes, behaviour and achievement, teaching and learning, provision for children under five and for pupils with SEN, as well as standards in science. Relationships with parents were good and now they are very good. National test results for Year 2 and Year 6 have declined in comparison with schools nationally, but provisional results for Years 2 and 6 show improvement in 2004. School self-evaluation is now in place, but has had insufficient impact on teaching, learning and improvement.

JOHN KYRLE HIGH SCHOOL (1,068 pupils, January 2005)

This is a good school, with many very good features and provides good value for money. Driven by the dynamic and determined leadership of the headteacher, the school is ambitious for further improvement. Standards are above average and improving. Pupils' achievements are good as a result of consistently good teaching.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The very good leadership of the headteacher and key staff is providing a strong sense of common purpose and direction
- Hardworking staff are committed to providing high quality teaching and learning
- Good teaching and the confident and positive attitudes of pupils ensure that most achieve well.
- Productive and increasingly effective links with partner schools and the wider community help to promote achievement.
- Assessment procedures and systems for monitoring pupils' progress are thorough and provide a very effective means of monitoring progress and supporting pupils.
- The impact of Technology College status has been very good, enhancing the quality of learning across all subjects, and particularly in design and technology which has made impressive improvements and has the potential to be a centre of excellence.
- Self-evaluation procedures are good but need further consistency at subject level to ensure that they are fully effective.
- The attendance of a small minority of pupils is unsatisfactory

Overall, the school has made substantial improvements since the last inspection in 1997, maintaining the strengths identified and making confident and secure improvements elsewhere. Most importantly there is now a strong and positive culture for school improvement. Standards in Year 9 tests and in GCSE examinations have been improving more rapidly than the national trend. A-level performance has been more mixed, although recent improvements are marked and much better results are predicted for 2004. Key issues at the time of the last inspection have been tackled effectively.

LEA PRIMARY SCHOOL (72 pupils, January 2004)

This is a good and effective school. The pupils do well because the teaching is good. The headteacher provides very strong leadership and manages the school very effectively. The school provides sound value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The headteacher leads the school very effectively
- The teaching is generally good, and very good in the Foundation Stage and years 5 and 6
- The pupils achieve well and make good progress
- The curriculum is very rich, well planned, lively and interesting
- There are strong links with the parents, the community and other schools
- The school's ethos is caring and inclusive
- The teaching assistants provide very good support, particularly for the pupils with special educational needs.

The school has made good progress since the last inspection. The provision for, and standards in, ICT have improved significantly and are now above average, assessment is used effectively and the pupils with special educational needs are now very well supported. The school has succeeded in making improvements in standards in writing, but they are not yet as high as they should be.

ST MARY'S OF HOPE CE PRIMARY SCHOOL (17 pupils, January 2004)

This is a good school where the good leadership and teaching explain why pupils achieve well. The very good care and support make this a happy school where pupils behave well and enjoy learning. Parents speak highly of the good quality of education. Costs are very high with so few pupils but the school provides sound value for money. The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Pupils' achievements are good overall, and very good in history by year 5
- The headteachers' leadership is good and has helped to create a good team of staff
- There is a high degree of racial harmony and all groups of pupils get on well with each other
- The school cares for pupils very well and there are very good systems to ensure that all pupils, whatever their background or ability, have equal opportunities to learn.
- There is too little evaluation of teaching and learning to ensure consistently good practice in each class.

The school has done well since the last inspection, and has rectified the main weaknesses in assessment, curricular planning and the governors' annual report to parents. The teaching, leadership and care of pupils have improved and the new target-setting systems are helping pupils to attain higher standards but the evaluation of teaching remains a weakness.

WEOBLEY HIGH SCHOOL (483 pupils, January 2004)

This is a poor school in which teaching, leadership and achievement are poor; it gives poor value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are;

- The school has gone downhill in recent years as a result of poor leadership and management.
- Standards are only average by year 11; pupils' achievement is poor because of poor teaching.
- The provision for science, ICT and religious education is poor.
- The school is now starting to improve under the good leadership of the new headteacher.
- Behaviour is unsatisfactory, because too many teachers cannot control their classes.
- The curriculum is poor, it has not changed in response to the changing nature of the school's intake.
- Pupils do very well in design and technology as a result of very good teaching.

Improvement since the last inspection has been poor. Standards are worse and GCSE results have fallen, despite a higher attaining intake. Results in the national tests have improved faster than the national average because of rapid improvements in mathematics. Behaviour is worse; there are now more exclusions. Teaching is much worse.

[Both IASPS and Weobley High School accept the verdict of special measures, although collectively there is regret about the language used, particularly in the parents' summary. The school is moving forwards positively under the leadership of the new headteacher, Mrs Woodrow, who has just completed her first year in post.]

WESTFIELD SPECIAL SCHOOL (35 pupils, January 2004)

The needs of all pupils are satisfactorily met. The standard pupils achieve continued to be limited by the unsatisfactory accommodation. The school gives satisfactory value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The accommodation limits the quality and range of pupils' learning and their access to the work of therapists.
- The teachers' high expectations for learning and behaviour do not realise equivalent progress because of inconsistent planning for learning and inadequacies in the procedures for tracking the gains made by pupils.
- The work of the school is not checked sufficiently well by senior managers or by governors especially the planning for learning and the procedures for tracking the progress of pupils
- The caring ethos that is based on very good relationships between staff and pupils.
- The very good attitude pupils have to their work and their commitment to doing their best.
- For the older pupils, the length of the teaching week is too short.

Satisfactory improvement has been made since the last inspection, although some of the issues identified then have not been fully attended to. The monitoring and evaluation of teaching remains too informal and the older pupils continue to spend too little time learning science. The curriculum now meets National Curriculum requirements, the development plan has improved and the procedures for financial planning are satisfactory. The unsatisfactory accommodation continues to impose limitations on what pupils can learn.