



21 June 2005

Mrs L Smith
Acting headteacher
Brookfield School
Fouldrey Avenue
Poulton le Fylde
Lancashire
FY6 7HE

Dear Mrs Smith

Implementation of Brookfield School's Action Plan

Following the visit of Mr G Jones HMI and Mr A Bennett HMI, to your school on 16 and 17 June 2005, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to confirm the inspection findings which are recorded in the attached note.

The visit was the first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures. The focus of the inspection was to assess: the quality of the action plan; the pupils' standards of attainment and their progress; the quality of education provided; the leadership and management of the school; the pupils' attitudes and behaviour; and the progress that has been made in implementing the action plan.

The school's action plan is satisfactory overall with some weaknesses.

The weaknesses outlined in the second paragraph of the note of the inspection findings should be addressed and amendments prepared by the second monitoring inspection.

The LEA's statement of action was not available prior to the first inspection and will be reviewed at the second monitoring inspection.

The school has made limited progress since being subject to special measures.

The LEA's target date of autumn term 2006 for the removal of special measures is realistic.

The school should not appoint newly qualified teachers until further notice.

I am copying this letter and the note of the inspection findings to the Secretary of State, the chair of governors and the Director of Education and Cultural Services for Lancashire. This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Andrew Reid
Head of Institutional Inspections and Frameworks Division

IMPLEMENTATION OF BROOKFIELD SCHOOL'S ACTION PLAN

Findings of the first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures

During the visit 12 lessons or parts of lessons, two registration sessions and an assembly were inspected. Meetings were held with the headteacher, the chair of governors, the consultant headteacher, the senior teacher and a learning support assistant. Informal discussions were held with other members of staff and with pupils and samples of work were examined. A range of documents was scrutinised. Using this evidence, HMI made the following observations to the headteacher, the chair of the governing body and representatives from the LEA.

The school's action plan is satisfactory with some weaknesses. The action plan is a comprehensive document which addresses all of the identified key weaknesses. It has been produced in full consultation with the staff, the governing body and representatives of the LEA. The plan identifies suitable targets for each key issue and appropriate tasks to be undertaken but does not sufficiently prioritise the targets to ensure that the most important are addressed first. The timescales for some activities are unclear without defined end dates and appropriate milestones for the completion of individual tasks. Success criteria include suitable quantitative targets for the quality of teaching but such targets are not in place for improvements to attainment and behaviour, and the reduction of exclusions. The evaluation of progress is too infrequent to ensure the pace and rigour of improvement.

The LEA's statement of action was not available prior to this inspection and will be reviewed at the next visit.

The attainment of pupils varies considerably within each year group. The majority of pupils attain below the expected levels for their age but some pupils are attaining in line with expectations. However, in the 2004 national tests for Key Stage 3 some pupils attained above the nationally expected Level 5 in some or all of the three core subjects. There is an increasing emphasis upon pupils gaining external accreditation at the end of Key Stage 4 and in 2004, four pupils passed GCSE in English language, English literature, mathematics and science and one pupil passed the short course in information and communication technology. In the current year, five pupils have been entered for the core subjects at GCSE. Progress was satisfactory in five of the 12 lessons observed.

The quality of teaching was good in two lessons and satisfactory in two lessons. It was unsatisfactory in eight lessons. Some but not all of the unsatisfactory teaching was by supply teachers. The proportion of unsatisfactory teaching is far too high and should be addressed urgently.

In the lessons where teaching was satisfactory or better teachers were enthusiastic and engaged the interest of the pupils. Teachers provided a range of suitable

learning activities which were well matched to the abilities of the pupils. The pace of the lessons was brisk. There were good relationships between pupils and staff with effective behaviour management. Teachers had high expectations, praised pupils for appropriate achievements and encouraged them to do their best. Relationships between pupils were usually good and there was a positive working environment. In the best lessons, pupils were given the responsibility to work in pairs or groups and responded well. Effective use was made of teaching assistants to support individual pupils.

Where the teaching was unsatisfactory, there were often weaknesses in the management of behaviour and a productive working environment was not established. The expectations of teachers were too low and the planned activities did not reflect the range of ability within the group. The pace of lessons was too slow and there was too little variety in the activities planned. Planning for lessons was often poor and in some cases teachers displayed inadequate subject knowledge.

Schemes of work vary in quality from satisfactory to poor. Few have been sufficiently adapted to recognise the specific needs and interests of pupils in this school. It is intended that all subjects will have produced new, detailed planning for the start of the autumn term, based on the model used for teaching English. This is a matter of urgency if the quality of curriculum entitlement, progression and continuity within and across year groups is to be improved. In the planning that has been updated so far, there is too little emphasis on adapting work to meet individual needs. The importance of day-to-day formative assessment in measuring the pupils' progress, adapting their future work as a result, and setting them challenging targets for attainment is not given sufficient prominence. Increased emphasis on the pupils being entered for national tests and examinations is timely, but developing a more positive culture for learning within the school is necessary if pupils are to benefit fully from new opportunities. Links with a local college are providing additional vocational courses in Key Stage 4; these have the potential to motivate reluctant learners but the school should ensure that the overall curriculum is coherent and balanced and that it provides value for money.

The school has made sound efforts to improve provision for the pupils' personal development. There are some attractive displays concerning world religions and other cultures; appropriate links are sometimes made between assembly themes, for example social responsibility, and the texts pupils study in English. Wall-mounted extracts from examination papers and pupils' answers to questions contribute to the increasing sense of academic aspiration, as does the readily available information on post-16 progression routes. The pupils understand how they are expected to co-operate and to follow accepted rules of politeness and etiquette in the morning 'tea and toast' session and at lunchtime, when an adult sits at each table with the pupils. A generally calm and pleasant atmosphere is evident during these times. However, some pupils continue to make unpleasant comments to each other and to staff, and frequently use foul or offensive

language; staff respond inconsistently in these situations and so potentially confuse pupils' understanding of what is or is not acceptable.

In general, the quality of the pupils' behaviour around the school is acceptable, with only occasional boisterousness and a few incidents of minor disruption. The pupils' behaviour and attitudes were satisfactory in seven lessons, including two in which they were good. However, individual pupils or whole classes were sometimes openly rude or defiant. The pupils' attitudes to work are less satisfactory than their behaviour; which are frequently lethargic and disengaged; even when classrooms are calm and orderly, it is very seldom that the majority of pupils is on task and concentrating on completing work to the best of their ability.

Attendance improved from 71.4 per cent to 79.4 per cent in the previous two school years; in the current year, up to the start of June, attendance is just below 82 per cent. This shows a good trend of improvement and reflects particularly on the school's success in establishing closer working relationships with parents and the educational welfare service.

The current headteacher has been absent since January 2005 and the deputy headteacher is undertaking the role of the acting headteacher. She is enthusiastic, energetic and determined that the school will improve. She is being well supported for 2.5 days each week by a consultant headteacher, who is an LEA monitoring and intervention team adviser. This arrangement is to continue until December 2005. The leadership of the school has therefore been strengthened and clear areas of responsibility have been established within the senior team. However, too much of the success of implementing the action plan currently depends upon the acting headteacher. The role of middle managers is being developed and appropriate training has started. The leadership team has begun to formulate a strategy for the monitoring and evaluation of the quality of education within the school but this has yet to be agreed and implemented.

The governing body has been strengthened with a new chair of governors and the recruitment of three additional governors. The LEA is actively seeking to appoint two further governors to provide the necessary range of experience. A schedule of meetings has been established and a committee structure agreed. The governors are committed to the improvement of the school and the chair of governors has a clear view of the challenges facing the school and of the priorities for development.

The LEA is providing effective support for the school, particularly with regard to supporting leadership and management. The impact of the work of the consultant headteacher is evident in improvements to routine management. The LEA has provided additional funding to allow time for the professional development of subject leaders and there has been some effective support from teacher advisers and the school's adviser.

Action taken to address the areas for improvement

1: improve leadership and management so that it has a greater impact on improving the quality of education in the school by developing more effective systems to monitor and evaluate the work of the school

Leadership and management have been evaluated above. The senior leadership team has correctly established clear areas of responsibility for managing the work of the school. The implementation of change is at an early stage and the impact is not yet consistently evident in routine practice. There is not yet a clear view as to how systematic monitoring and evaluation of the quality of provision will be undertaken and this key priority should now be addressed urgently.

Progress on this area is limited.

2: improve leadership and management so that it has a greater impact on improving the quality of education in the school by improving the overall quality of the curriculum and teaching in all subjects where currently these are unsatisfactory

Initial work has been targeted at improving curriculum planning within the weakest subjects. This has been initiated with advisory support that the school reports as being effective. The consultant headteacher has undertaken effective monitoring of teaching and identified strengths and weaknesses. Other internal records of monitoring of teaching lack rigour and do not clearly identify weaknesses. There is no comprehensive strategy in place to improve the quality of teaching, although there are plans to address this in September.

Progress on this area is limited

3: improve leadership and management so that it has a greater impact on improving the quality of education in the school by improving the effectiveness of care policies and procedures, the use of restraint and the management of pupils' behaviour

Provision for counselling remains limited and although better links are developing with a range of health professionals, support from educational psychologists is described as 'erratic and not planned'. A clear policy and set of procedures for behaviour management is well-known to pupils and staff. Pupils generally accept the opportunity to gain points that can be traded for rewards; the awarding of points at the end of lessons is a potentially valuable opportunity for developing the pupils' self awareness and their understanding of responsibility and accountability for their actions. However, there are inconsistencies in the way different staff do or do not penalise pupils, for example for swearing or refusing to complete work and this sometimes generates dissent or feelings of injustice that carry over to the next lesson. While it may be necessary to remove pupils quickly from classrooms when they exhibit extreme or dangerous behaviour, removal for comparatively minor

offences often creates further difficulties of reintegration when they return later in the lesson. The level of exclusions has reduced, but remains too high, as does the incidence of using restraint; whole-school behaviour targets are discussed with pupils weekly in assembly but at a superficial numerical level rather than considering what lies behind the figures. Senior staff might consider more carefully the relationship between the quality of teaching and indiscipline in order to address the causes of problems rather than the symptoms. An appropriate balance between care and challenging expectations has not yet been achieved in many classrooms.

Progress in this area for improvement is limited.

4. improve leadership and management so that it has a greater impact on improving the quality of education in the school by establishing more effective systems to involve parents in the education of their children

The school has sensibly sought to retain the support of parents and has initiated a regular newsletter for parents from the headteacher and a termly letter from the governing body. A meeting held for parents to discuss the inspection report was reported to be positive and resulted in two parents becoming governors. The governing body is correctly reviewing the information provided in the prospectus and governors' annual report. Parents are now regularly contacted by telephone to discuss issues and home visits are carried out when required. Draft policies are being distributed to parents and their views are sought. The annual progress report to parents is being reviewed and plans for an interim report are being considered. A homework diary is to be introduced from September to increase the involvement of parents in the work of pupils.

Progress on this area is reasonable.

5. improve leadership and management so that it has a greater impact on improving the quality of education in the school by putting in place suitable measures to tackle pupils' concerns about bullying

Sensitive ways of reporting bullying are being considered; appropriate progressive sanctions are already available where bullying is identified. However, the subject of bullying has raised issues of definition among staff and pupils; further opportunities for discussion are necessary to establish a shared acceptance of pupils' rights to individuality within the agreed structures and protocols of the school community.

Progress in this area for improvement is limited.

6. to meet statutory requirements ensure that the full National Curriculum is available; key policies are up to date and parents are provided with information they should legally be given

The pupils' access to the National Curriculum has been improved but there remains a challenge for the school in ensuring that there is sufficient secure subject knowledge among staff to teach effectively the full curriculum. The process of updating and reviewing a wide range of policies is underway, but the quality is uneven; staff should ensure that the policies are relevant to the circumstances of this school and the specific needs of its pupils rather than merely a paper exercise to meet statutory requirements. Plans to improve information to parents are to be implemented at the appropriate time. The assembly inspected contained no element of worship or opportunity for the pupils to reflect on their own lives or broader issues.

Progress in this area is limited.