

Prospects Learning Services Ltd  
132-138 High Street  
Bromley  
Kent  
BR1 1EZ

T 020 8313 7760  
F 020 8464 3393

Ofsted helpline  
08456 404045

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Ms C Jones  
Headteacher  
Little Stanmore Nursery, First & Middle School  
St David's Drive  
Edgware  
Middlesex  
HA8 6JH

Dear Ms Jones

## **SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF LITTLE STANMORE NURSERY, INFANT AND MIDDLE SCHOOL**

### **Introduction**

Following my visit with Ceri Morgan HMI and Peter Thrussell, Additional Inspector, to your school on 14 and 15 September 2005, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the third monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures on 1 July 2004.

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, nominated staff, groups of pupils, the chair of governors and representatives from the LEA.

### **Context**

The previous headteacher resigned and left the school at the end of May 2005. A seconded headteacher took charge of the school for the remainder of the summer term. An interim headteacher was appointed on a one-year contract from 1 September 2005. The substantive deputy headteacher returned full-time at the beginning of this academic year.

## **Achievement and standards**

In 2005, teacher assessments replaced national tests at the end of Year 2. The unvalidated results of these assessments showed that, by comparison with the national tests in 2004, the proportion of pupils attaining the expected Level 2 in reading and writing declined by five percentage points to 52.9 per cent. The results for mathematics also declined, by 25.4 percentage points to 58.8 per cent. Year 2 pupils have failed to achieve the higher Level 3 in any of the core subjects since 2003.

The unvalidated results in the 2005 national tests at Key Stage 2 also record a decline in standards. Compared with 2004, the proportion attaining the expected Level 4 in English declined by 5.6 percentage points to 65 per cent. The equivalent results in mathematics declined by 19.8 percentage points to 56 per cent, while those for science declined by 25.5 percentage points to 51 per cent. The proportion of the pupils attaining the higher Level 5 showed a similar pattern of decline. These results are below the 2005 LEA average and are likely to be below the national figures.

In the Foundation Stage the quality of education is good. The pupils' attainment across the six areas of learning is close to the LEA's average with the pupils' social and mathematical development a constant strength. Evidence from lesson observations and non-statutory tests confirm that two fifths of the pupils in each year group work at levels below those that might be expected for their age. In English most pupils struggle with unfamiliar words as they lack the appropriate decoding skills. Handwriting is often untidy with inconsistent letter formation. In mathematics, many pupils, notably in Key Stage 2, lack basic number skills and the ability to apply these in different contexts.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in July 2004:

- raise standards in English, mathematics and science throughout the school – inadequate progress.

## **Personal development and well-being**

The consistent use of the revised strategies for behaviour management has significantly improved the pupils' behaviour. This was apparent in the way the pupils came into assembly and their conduct throughout. The calm and purposeful atmosphere noted in most lessons contributed to the quality of learning; however, opportunities for independent learning remain limited.

Fixed-term exclusions have been used appropriately and the new behaviour protocols have been clearly communicated to parents. Seven pupils have been excluded for short periods since the beginning of the academic year. Pockets of unsatisfactory behaviour still exist where teaching lacks pace and engagement or corridor supervision is inadequate. A deputy headteacher now oversees behaviour throughout the school; he will manage the Learning Zone, a pilot project to support pupils at risk of exclusion currently being developed with support from the LEA. The

impact of these recent developments will be reviewed as part of the next monitoring inspection. Although the rate of attendance in the summer term improved to 91.8 per cent, it remained below the national figure for primary schools. There is uncertainty with regard to the exact number of pupils on role for the autumn term. The school has sought the support of the LEA to address this issue.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in July 2004:

- improve attendance – inadequate progress.

### **Quality of provision**

The quality of teaching has improved since the last monitoring visit, when 8 of the 25 lessons were unsatisfactory. During this visit, teaching was satisfactory or better in 17 of the 22 lessons; it was good in 6 and outstanding in 2. Inadequate teaching was seen in 5 lessons.

In the more successful lessons teachers showed a clear understanding of the lesson content and shared with the pupils what was expected. Relationships were good and often based on the effective direction of support staff. In these lessons a clear structure and well directed questions helped to establish the pupils' prior knowledge. Assessment information was used thoughtfully to inform teaching and learning. The effective use of time provided opportunities for the pupils to ask questions and investigate new ideas. The pupils almost without exception responded well to these exciting sessions. Learning styles were varied and good use was made of the resources available including the limited number of interactive whiteboards. In these effective lessons, higher achieving pupils were provided with appropriate challenges.

Where teaching was satisfactory, there were some residual weaknesses. Good introductions were often followed by mundane tasks that did not meet the learning needs of some groups of pupils. Teachers often made good use of support staff during lessons, although practice was variable; for example, there were instances where teaching assistants were not fully engaged in the delivery of the lesson content or in supporting individual pupils. Opportunities to further develop the pupils' literacy and numeracy skills were missed during foundation-subject lessons. The use of assessment information was inconsistent. Marking was more often related to organisation and effort; constructive comment was limited.

Inadequate lessons shared a number of common characteristics and it was during these lessons that pupils' behaviour deteriorated. Unsatisfactory preparation provided unimaginative tasks that failed to meet the pupils' learning needs. Expectations were limited. Question and answer sessions were unproductive and seldom used to help assess the pupils' learning. Although some teachers showed a variety of questioning styles, the balance was towards closed and restricted questions that gave the pupils few opportunities to discuss or explore new ideas. There were also occasions where the teacher's subject knowledge was inaccurate or presented in a misleading way.

The quality of learning was directly linked to the teaching and was satisfactory or better on 17 occasions. Overall, however, insufficient use was made of imaginative and exciting resources to make lessons more stimulating for the pupils. In some instances long introductory sessions offered little challenge or engagement. The slow pace of some lessons inhibited progress; however, most pupils remained patient and attentive. The lack of opportunities for independent learning is placing limitations on teaching and learning in Years 2 to 7.

The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs is above average; however, too many lessons still take insufficient account of the levels at which these pupils should be working and the styles of learning appropriate to their particular needs.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in July 2004:

- improve the consistency of teaching as a matter of urgency – satisfactory progress.

## **Leadership and management**

The governing body, with support from the LEA, has appointed an experienced interim headteacher on a one-year contract. Appropriate sanctions have been introduced to deal with the poor behaviour that had previously disrupted learning. The governors and the LEA have sound plans to enhance provision for those pupils at risk of exclusion.

The senior management team has a realistic view of the key areas requiring improvement. They understand that much needs to be done to develop the use of assessment to improve learning; however, initial plans are dominated by regular data gathering that will leave insufficient opportunity for teaching. Appropriate plans to improve the monitoring and evaluation of teaching have been developed with the support of the LEA. The deputy headteachers display a renewed confidence in their ability to support school improvement. The senior management team is developing the capacity to improve and their contribution to school improvement, including their monitoring and evaluation of all inclusion strategies, will be reviewed during the next monitoring inspection.

The role of the subject coordinators remains underdeveloped. The core subject coordinators have identified the need to analyse the performance data for their subjects before reviewing schemes of work and resource allocation. The provision for pupils who have special educational needs is expanding rapidly; however, the coordination of this support is diverse and ineffective. Individual plans are now up-to-date and regular reviews of progress are planned. The special needs coordinator has only informal contact with the teaching assistants who provide learning support. The direction of support staff by class teachers varies considerably and priorities have not been reviewed by the senior management team. The school has yet to develop a well-managed inclusion structure.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in July 2004:

- improve the monitoring and evaluation roles of the leadership team and subject co-ordinators to help raise standards in each subject – satisfactory progress.

### **External support**

The LEA took effective action to address the weaknesses in leadership identified in the previous monitoring report; however, issues relating to the quality of teaching remain to be addressed. The school benefits from the advice of some advanced skills teachers although it is not yet clear how these teachers will be used in the coming year.

### **Main Judgements**

Progress since being subject to special measures – inadequate.

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – satisfactory.

One newly qualified teacher may be appointed as long as the LEA has a clearly defined role in providing support and guidance and the substantive deputy headteacher is the mentor.

### **Priorities for further improvement**

- Make more use of assessment to inform teaching and learning.
- Continue to improve the quality of teaching.
- Raise standards.

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

Yours sincerely

David Jones  
**H M Inspector**