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Mr Jon Abbey
The Headteacher
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Dear Mr Abbey

SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF BUSH HILL PARK PRIMARY SCHOOL

Introduction

Following my visit, with Julie Ward HMI and Sean O'Toole AI, to your school on 8 and 9 November 2005, 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 April 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 documents and met with the headship team, phase leaders, the chair of governors, some curriculum leaders, several pupils and two representatives from the local authority.

Context

The acting headteacher started in the school in September. The school continues to have a high turnover of pupils with 47 joining and 24 leaving since the start of the academic year.

Achievement and standards

Standards remain well below average across the school. Pupils of all ages, backgrounds and abilities should do better; their achievement is unsatisfactory. Children in the Foundation Stage make insufficient progress. In other year groups, progress is uneven and often unsatisfactory. Few pupils competently apply their literacy skills to their work in history and geography because the work relies heavily on undemanding worksheets. Several pupils commented that they found the work too easy. The limited curriculum provides insufficient stimulation and challenge for pupils and does little to promote higher standards.

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

- Raise standards and achievement appreciably throughout the school – inadequate progress
- Provide a more meaningful, relevant and motivating curriculum that promotes higher standards for all children – inadequate progress

Personal development and well-being

Most pupils enjoy school. They talk excitedly about the opportunities to take part in the wide range of extra-curricular activities. They have positive attitudes, treating each other and adults with courtesy and respect. Pupils from different cultural and ethnic backgrounds get on well together. Most listen attentively in lessons and are keen to please their teachers. When lessons are interesting they concentrate for long periods of time, although some, especially boys, become restless when the lessons lack pace or the teachers talk for too long.

Pupils' behaviour in and around the school is often good. There are harmonious relationships between pupils who express few concerns about bullying or rough play. Pupils say that their worries are dealt with quickly. The school is a safe place.

The staff work hard to promote good attendance. Systems to encourage parents to bring their children to school are well established and effective. Although attendance rates are improving they remain below average because a small minority of pupils is consistently absent. Almost all pupils arrive on time for school.

Progress on the area for improvement identified by the inspection in April 2005:

- Increase the levels of attendance and punctuality – good progress

Quality of provision

In the Foundation Stage, provision continues to be poor. Insufficient attention is given to building on the pupils' previous learning; this is particularly weak in the nursery. The curriculum is not planned well enough to develop key skills progressively and give these young pupils all the exciting opportunities they should have.

In the rest of the school, teaching and learning remains inadequate overall. Broadly two-thirds of the lessons are satisfactory or good, but in the remaining third of lessons, the teaching is unsatisfactory with few pupils making sufficient progress. The quality of teaching is inconsistent: it is possible to find the same planned lesson being taught well in one class and unsatisfactorily in another.

In the good lessons, teachers organise interesting tasks and use resources effectively. They give clear explanations which pupils understand. Pupils are confident contributors and teachers encourage their thinking further through well targeted questioning. In the many weaker lessons, however, teachers do not check carefully enough how well the pupils are learning. They often talk for long periods without allowing pupils enough opportunities to think for themselves.

Teachers' planning throughout the school is not precise enough; lesson plans rarely identify appropriate work for specific groups of pupils, including those who have special educational needs or for whom English is an additional language. There is some good practice in deploying teaching assistants to support learning but there are inconsistencies in how well the teachers brief them. The input provided by the learning mentor is effectively helping to build good links between parents and school staff.

Whole school assessment procedures have been well developed recently and are now efficiently organised, providing clear information about pupils' levels of attainment and progress. The assistant headteacher, who leads this area, has a secure understanding of how to ensure the data is used effectively on a day-to-day basis. However, as yet, this has not translated into classes. Information is not used effectively by teachers to ensure pupils are given work that accurately fits their needs.

The curriculum provision is still weak. However, the action plan contains a suitable timeline for improvement.

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

- Take urgent action to improve the quality of teaching and assessment of children's needs – inadequate progress
- Make better provision for all groups of children – inadequate progress
- Put in place rigorous and consistent assessment procedures that identify the needs of all children precisely and track their achievements carefully – good progress
- Improve the provision in the Foundation Stage – inadequate progress

Leadership and management

For most of the summer term after the inspection, the school made slow progress while suitable arrangements for the headship were being made. However, since September, when a very able acting headteacher was seconded from a local school, there has been rapid improvement. He has quickly and accurately assessed the development needs of the school, ensuring that the action plan is a well focused and

realistic working document. Good systems have been quickly established for tracking pupils' progress, informing parents and monitoring teaching. Staff, parents and governors have been involved well, and morale has begun to rise. The headship team, consisting of the acting headteacher, his deputy and the assistant headteacher, is becoming very effective. These staff are clear about what needs to be done and they evaluate the school's effectiveness, including the quality of teaching, very honestly and accurately.

Some early progress has been made in developing the role of other managers. The phase leaders are beginning to take on responsibility for monitoring standards in their teams and make a satisfactory contribution overall. However, the management of the Foundation Stage remains inadequate. Although the resourcing is suitable, there is insufficient clarity about how necessary improvements in the provision for the youngest children can be achieved. The role of subject leaders remains significantly underdeveloped. These staff are not clear enough about what is expected of them. They do not take enough responsibility for standards in their subjects and their role is not well enough understood by the staff. Nonetheless, resources are now of good quality in English, science and art and design. The day-to-day management of provision for pupils with special needs and English as a second language is also weak, which is why pupils in these groups do not make enough progress. Some experienced staff are not taking lead responsibilities, which is unusual these days.

The governing body, which is well led by its committed chair, is gaining a better awareness of the issues facing the school. This is helped by the very accurate and helpful reports provided by the acting headteacher. Sound plans are in place for the recruitment of a substantive headteacher. At present, the school has good capacity for further improvement.

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

- Improve significantly the overall leadership, management and governance of the school – satisfactory progress overall; the senior leadership has improved very well but there remains a significant need to improve the effectiveness of middle management
- Improve the resources in the Foundation Stage, English, science and art and design – good progress; this issue is now adequately dealt with
- Implement the home school agreement fully and report the impact of the race relations policy to parents – good progress; this issue is also now resolved

External support

The local authority has provided the school with much good support, in particular brokering the secondment of the acting headteacher and placing the school in the national Intensifying Support Programme. Its statement of action gives realistic timescales, actions and success criteria. The newly appointed school improvement officer provides valuable professional advice. However, his time has been limited and the school deserves and needs a higher level of support, particularly in improving

the quality of teaching and in developing the Foundation Stage provision. In addition, the local authority monitoring of the school is inadequate. The authority is not sufficiently aware of how well the school is doing and has not evaluated its progress. Nor are there clear enough plans about how this will be done.

Main Judgements

Progress since being subject to special measures– satisfactory. Although there are several key areas where progress is inadequate, the school and local authority have been right to focus their early attention on securing the senior leadership. This has been achieved successfully.

Newly qualified teachers may not be appointed.

The local authority statement of action is good.

Priorities for further improvement

- To provide high quality monitoring and coaching of staff to bring about quickly significant improvements in the quality of teaching
- To improve the management and provision in the Foundation Stage, so that all pupils receive their full curriculum entitlement and make appropriate progress

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

Yours sincerely

Robin Hammerton
HM Inspector