



19 April 2006

Ms Rebecca Thomas  
Brook Community School  
Sigdon Road  
Hackney  
London  
E8 1AS

Dear Ms Thomas

## **FRESH START: MONITORING INSPECTION OF BROOK COMMUNITY SCHOOL**

### **Introduction**

Following my visit to your school on 14 and 15 March 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 opened in March 2005.

This letter will be published 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**

I observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, members of the leadership team, the chair of governors, the chair of the school council and a representative from the LA.

### **Context**

The building work that was expected to be completed by Christmas 2005 continues and parts of the site are still occupied by contractors and their plant and equipment. Foundation Stage classes have been able to move into better accommodation which will become a secure self-contained area when building work is complete. High levels of traffic noise from the adjacent main road make listening difficult in some classrooms and the window replacement project has been halted because of a dispute with the local authority about the type of windows to be installed. This is having a negative impact on learning because the existing sash windows are in a poor state of repair and

provide poor thermal and acoustic insulation and in some cases inadequate ventilation. Fresh Start funding has been used to purchase resources for all subject areas including useful collections of books for the book corners in each classroom and interactive mathematics resources for whole class teaching. Teachers have worked hard to improve the learning environment and classrooms are attractive and stimulating places to learn. There has been a significant increase in the amount of pupils' work on display in classrooms and public spaces.

### **Achievement and standards**

Standards are improving but, for most pupils, remain below or well below the expectation for their ages. The school's data shows that many pupils are making at least satisfactory progress in reading and writing and that some are making good progress. However, progress across classes and year groups has been variable. The supported reading scheme in Year 1 and the carefully targeted intensive reading recovery programme have had a positive impact on improving reading. Training has enabled staff to be more accurate in assessing the pupils' writing and as a result a secure baseline has been established from which future progress in writing can be measured.

Satisfactory progress

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

The pupils' attitudes and behaviour are satisfactory overall; they were satisfactory or better in almost all the lessons and good in just over half. Many pupils are attentive and concentrate on their work well, particularly the younger pupils. They settle down to work quickly, listen to instructions and respond appropriately. Most pupils also listen well and are courteous and sensitive to each other in paired and group discussion work. Pupil attitude surveys have been used to assess the extent to which pupils feel safe and in response the school has launched an anti-bullying week. Both of the assemblies seen gave pupils a chance to reflect about bullying and gave a clear message that bullying will not be tolerated at this school.

Consistent implementation of the behaviour policy has resulted in a reduction in the number of exclusions. Pupils understand how they are expected to behave and know what the consequences are for inappropriate behaviour. Attendance is just below the national average despite the appropriate steps that the school has taken to challenge poor attendance.

The school council represents pupils well. Pupils feel that they have a voice and that their views and opinions are listened to and actions are taken to address their concerns or develop their ideas.

Pupils are more engaged in their learning and in some lessons they are given opportunities to assess their own achievements. A good start has been made by some teachers in involving pupils in assessing their own learning but this is not consistent across all classes.

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

- Involve pupils more actively in assessing their own learning – inadequate progress.

### **Quality of provision**

The quality of teaching was satisfactory or better in all 11 lessons seen, including five where it was good and one where it was outstanding. In two of the lessons that were judged to be satisfactory overall the strengths only just outweighed the weaknesses.

In the best lessons, the relationships between adults and children were good; the pace was brisk and the tasks were well planned to meet the pupils' needs and interests; learning objectives were precise and communicated using language that the pupils could easily understand; teachers used a variety of methods to gauge the pupils' understanding and modified their plans accordingly if the learning objective was not being met; there were good opportunities for pupils to discuss and explore their ideas; expectations of what the pupils could achieve were high and praise was only given when it was due. In the weaker lessons the pupils were not sufficiently challenged, particularly the most able; tasks were mundane or were over directed by the teacher and gave the pupils too little opportunity to develop independence; teachers did not get the pupils to think about what they already knew about a topic and missed good opportunities to make links to prior learning or other areas of the curriculum and some strategies that teachers used to ensure that they had the pupils attention were ineffective.

Teaching assistants provide good support for individuals and groups although they are sometimes underused in the sections of the lesson where the whole class are being taught together.

Improvements in tracking the pupils' achievements and better use of assessment information to match tasks to pupils needs has begun to raise awareness of the levels at which pupils are working and their next steps for

learning. However, expectations of what the pupils can achieve are often too low.

The curriculum is enhanced by the use of specialist teachers for art, French, music and physical education. These teachers lead in their own subject areas and work with other teachers to share their expertise and to build further capacity.

Although there are increasingly good resources for information and communication technology this is an area of the curriculum that is underdeveloped.

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

- Develop the use of assessment information to provide a better match of tasks to the pupils' needs and prior attainment – satisfactory progress.
- Raise expectations and increase the level of challenge, particularly for the most able – inadequate progress.

## **Leadership and management**

Leadership and management are good. The school's system for tracking the pupils' achievements is being used to identify the progress that pupils are making and to identify pupils who are at risk of underachieving in reading, writing and mathematics. The monitoring programme, used to identify strengths and weaknesses in teaching and learning, provides staff with good feedback about how they can improve and develop their lessons. The senior leadership is committed to continuing professional development for staff and teachers are being encouraged share best practice and to develop their skills and responsibilities.

Joint observations of lessons have been conducted to ensure that judgements are accurate and consistent. However, some judgements do not focus sufficiently on the pupils' achievements and as a result are over generous. Middle leaders are being developed so that they are enabled to undertake a more strategic role in school leadership.

Governors' consultation evenings have been held so that parents have a voice and a survey has been conducted to find out parents opinions about bullying. Link governors are being developed so that the governing body can be better informed about each curriculum area and parent governors are involved in the development of an association of a parent teacher association.

Satisfactory progress.

### **External support**

The school uses an appropriate range of intervention strategies to support pupils who are identified as being at risk. Good relationships have been established with external support agencies including Hackney Learning Trust, Millfields community primary school and business education partner UBS bank.

### **Main Judgements**

The school's overall progress is satisfactory.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the chair of governors and the Chief Education Officer for Hackney and the Hackney Learning Trust.

Yours sincerely

Robert Ellis  
**H M Inspector**