



9 March 2005

Mr Stephen Smith
Headteacher
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Dagenham Road
Dagenham
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Dear Mr Smith

SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF EASTBROOK COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL

Introduction

Following my visit Peter McGregor AI, Brian Evans AI, Lynne Kauffman AI and Bill Stoneham AI to your school on 22 and 23 February 2006, 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 September 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 headteacher, groups of pupils, the chair of governors, a representative from the local authority (LA), members of the senior leadership team and heads of departments.

Achievement and standards

Pupils join the school with standards that are broadly average. By the end of Year 11 they attain below average standards. Value added data shows that in Years 7 to 9 pupils make much less progress than similar pupils in other schools. Preliminary practice test results this term show that pupils are achieving higher standards in English, mathematics and science than at this stage of the school year in 2004 and 2005. However, projections based on these practice tests have not always been accurate predictors of overall Key

Stage 3 performance in the past. Low expectations remain the major barrier to raising achievement.

Personal development and well-being

Attendance rates have deteriorated since the inspection in September 2005. During the visit attendance was below 90%, with high unauthorised absence at over 3%. Attendance in Years 10 and 11 is particularly weak. The school is aware that attendance is worst on Thursday mornings when PHSE is timetabled. Interviews with pupils indicate that some of the lower attaining pupils do not find the work relevant or interesting. No actions have yet been taken to address this problem. Punctuality is also unsatisfactory because some pupils are unmotivated, the lack of movement time between lessons on the large site also causes difficulties.

Though most pupils behave well, some are too boisterous around school. There are too few staff around the site and buildings at break times and after school to ensure a calm and orderly atmosphere. The school day provides insufficient time for social interaction; the thirty minute lunch break is particularly rushed. Pupils have too few opportunities to take responsibility for, and to care for, their peers. Pupils do not feel that they are listened to, or their concerns acted upon.

In lessons when teaching is weak, pupils often misbehave. A minority of staff do not provide good role models for the pupils, and have confrontational and intolerant attitudes that exacerbate behaviour problems and alienate pupils.

Quality of provision

The quality of teaching is not improving quickly enough. The school now has an accurate view of the strengths and weaknesses in teaching but the plans to address the weaknesses do not take sufficient account of the scale of the problem. The school has identified accurately significant weaknesses in 25 per cent of lessons. The high proportion of inadequate teaching and the low proportion of good or better teaching are the causes of many problems within the school. There are too few examples of good teaching in some subjects to support and guide the weaker teachers and there are too few opportunities for staff to learn from good practice in other schools.

The school has established a reasonable system for monitoring and tracking pupils' progress and some staff are beginning to use this effectively to set targets. However, there is a long way to go before teachers use this information routinely as part of their classroom practice.

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

- Improve the quality of teaching so that the work matches pupils' needs and builds on their previous learning - inadequate progress
- Provide a curriculum that is appropriate to pupils' needs and abilities and gives them more planned opportunities to develop spiritual and cultural awareness – this area has not been reported on at this visit.
- Develop the process for monitoring pupils' academic progress so that they can be set challenging targets for improvement - satisfactory progress

Effectiveness and efficiency of the sixth form

The improvements made in the leadership and management of the school's sixth form are satisfactory. Some of the issues identified in the inspection report are now being addressed and the head of sixth form has identified some key objectives and has produced a first draft of a post-16 development plan. This document identifies appropriate objectives that are centred on improving the quality of teaching, learning, assessment and curriculum, for example, but the success criteria lack sharpness. The desired outcomes are not sufficiently challenging and are not readily quantifiable. Satisfactory progress has been made in the use of assessment data. Prior attainment is now being used to predict target grades and the students' progress against these targets is being monitored. This good development needs to be refined so that successes can be celebrated, as well as problems identified. One success that has been enjoyed since the last inspection is that applications to university are now running at a record level for the school.

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

- Ensure that post-16 provision adequately provides for the needs of students - satisfactory progress

Leadership and management

The school still does not have the capacity to make the urgent improvements identified in the inspection of September 2005. Despite everyone's best efforts the rate of improvement has been too slow. The school's action plan does not address the major weaknesses sufficiently well. Arrangements are

now in place to observe and make accurate judgements about the quality of teaching. However, there is insufficient emphasis on self-evaluation.

Despite the weaknesses in leadership, there are some reasons for optimism. The senior team is beginning to identify the key features of effective teaching and most of the members now want to use this information to improve the quality of teaching. The new plans being discussed by the headteacher and consultant to review the leadership structure of the school and give opportunities to effective staff to play a more prominent role in the school's development are more creative and innovative and take better account of the real challenges that the school faces.

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

- Increase the rigour of self-evaluation so that all managers understand how to use the information from monitoring to raise pupils' achievement – while there has been some satisfactory progress in monitoring, the impact of this is has yet to be seen and overall progress is inadequate.

External support

The LA has been too slow to act in support of the school. The planned review of teaching has not yet taken place and the statement of action reveals a lack of understanding of the difficulties the school faces. Though some advisor support has been effective in improving teaching, particularly in English, art, science, modern foreign languages and for inclusion, other subjects and aspects, where practice is also very weak, have not been able to benefit from suitable advice and support. The LA's statement of action does not include sufficient support and coaching to enable staff to improve their teaching. Overall, the plans are not sufficiently robust to ensure radical change.

Main Judgements

Progress since being subject to special measures– inadequate

Quality of LA's statement of action – inadequate. The LA should address the weaknesses identified and prepare amendments by the second monitoring inspection.

Newly qualified teachers may be appointed subject to approval by HMI.

Priorities for further improvement

- provide opportunities for staff to reflect on their practice and receive coaching and guidance;
- seek the views of students, staff and parents about the strengths and weakness of the provision and how it can be improved;
- improve the ethos of the school by:
 - providing more opportunities for social development
 - generating a culture which more clearly values each person
 - celebrating success and achievement.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the chair of governors and the Director for Education, Arts & Libraries, Barking and Dagenham.

Yours sincerely

Ann Berger
H M Inspector