



31 March 2006

Mr Jon Abbey
The Headteacher
Bush Hill Park Primary School
Main Avenue
Enfield
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Dear Mr Abbey

SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF BUSH HILL PARK PRIMARY SCHOOL

Introduction

Following my visit with Michael Madden AI and Jennifer Hall AI to your school on 21 and 22 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 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 headteacher and other staff, pupils, the chair of governors and a representative from the local authority (LA).

Context

Since the last monitoring visit, the then acting headteacher has been appointed to the substantive post. Four members of the permanent staff are currently on maternity leave, though the number of teachers on temporary contracts has fallen since the last visit.

Achievement and standards

Standards in all years remain well below average. Achievement is too low. Pupils are, however, beginning to make better progress in lessons, especially towards learning objectives provided for the whole class. Many of those with learning difficulties and disabilities (LDD) make satisfactory progress. The position for pupils for whom English is an additional language is patchier. When these pupils are well supported in lessons, or withdrawal groups, their achievement is sometimes good. However, too often, they find it difficult to understand the lessons and what is expected of them and so their progress is too slow.

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

- Raise standards and achievement appreciably throughout the school – inadequate progress

Personal development and well-being

Pupils are happy and polite at school. In all year groups, they enjoy participating in lessons, are keen to answer questions and pleased to demonstrate their skills to others. At the end of lessons, pupils listen well to each other when their work is being reviewed. Behaviour is good. In the playground, children play well together and conduct themselves safely. They line up sensibly and without fuss when it is time to return to class.

There are plenty of well-planned opportunities during the day for pupils to be physically active. The recent introduction of a daily 'Active 15' session from Reception to Year 6 is very successful. In the Nursery, children are learning to make healthy eating choices, by selecting apples and carrots, for example. No checks are in place, however, to ensure that all the children are eating a piece of fruit or vegetable.

Senior leaders work tirelessly to improve attendance. They have succeeded in maintaining the gradual increase in attendance seen over the last three years. A wide range of procedures is in place to encourage parents to send their children to school. Punctuality is rigorously monitored and detailed records kept. As a result, the school has succeeded in reducing the number of pupils who are more than ten minutes late in the morning.

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

- Increase the levels of attendance and punctuality – good progress

Quality of provision

The quality of teaching has improved considerably since the last monitoring inspection and is now satisfactory overall, except in the Nursery where it is inadequate. Recent training and coaching for members of staff has been effective in developing their teaching skills in a number of ways. It has raised the awareness of staff about the wide range of needs in their classes. Lessons are usually well paced and pupils are clear about what is expected of them. There are good relationships among pupils and between them and the staff. The use of techniques such as peer partners, where pupils share their ideas with each other, helps improve learning. In the better lessons, pupils respond productively to confident, stimulating and well-informed teaching, including opportunities to work independently or develop some of their own ideas. The school's accurate database about pupils' attainment is expanding steadily and well. Nevertheless, this information is not used well enough in lessons to match work closely to the needs of all pupils, including many of those who have English as an additional language. The next learning steps for each pupil are not clearly enough identified. More refined short-term planning is, however, helpfully broadening the range of activities used to promote learning, so more pupils are fully involved and making reasonable progress.

Adjustments to the curriculum are beginning to provide a more stimulating and interesting experience for many pupils. The school day starts smoothly with a before-school breakfast club and activities for some pupils, leading to a swift start to learning in many classes. Good use is made of time throughout the day, both in lessons and in the sound range of enrichment activities. Senior staff members are aware of improvements needed in the core subjects, notably in investigative mathematics and science and the more precise use of language in the classroom. There is a sensibly designed programme of curriculum development which has begun to raise standards. In science, for example, the curriculum has been broadened so pupils do more practical and investigational work. Overall, the curriculum has breadth and reasonable balance. However, it does not yet meet the needs of all

pupils. This is because there is too little effective planned variation of work to meet individual needs.

Children in the Foundation Stage enjoy their time in school and, in the Reception classes, many make suitable progress. Members of staff know and look after their pupils well. New approaches to assessment are being developed and have the potential to improve teaching, learning and the progress of learners into Key Stage 1. However, the quality of provision in the Nursery remains inadequate and has not improved appreciably since the last monitoring visit. The comments in the letter from that visit still apply. Though the areas of learning and early learning goals are recognised, there is still no sound structure to ensure the quality and coherence of what is taught and learned from day to day. Some useful information about individual pupils is gathered through observing what they do in the classroom and outside. Whilst this is appropriate practice, too much account of this information is taken by staff when preparing daily activities, without a clear and stimulating curriculum framework to guide their planning. Additionally, the needs of pupils starting school with English as an additional language are poorly assessed and met. Despite enhanced resources and the conscientious work of the staff, the temporary staffing arrangements in the Nursery reduce the capacity to adopt and consolidate the much needed improvements. As a result of all the issues identified in this paragraph, the engagement of the school's youngest pupils tends to be superficial, and their learning remains much too slow.

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 – good progress
- Make better provision for all groups of children – inadequate progress
- Provide a more meaningful, relevant and motivating curriculum that promotes higher standards for all children – satisfactory progress overall but inadequate in the Nursery
- 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 overall because of the continuing severe weaknesses in the Nursery. However, progress in the Reception classes is satisfactory

Leadership and management

The headteacher provides a very clear direction for the school, backed up by some excellent, and continually developing, management systems. School self-evaluation is very accurate and rigorous, so the headteacher is clear about what improvements are needed. However, he also listens carefully, takes on board other people's ideas, and brings about consensus. He enjoys immense trust and respect from the staff and has created a strong culture of improvement, in which difficult issues, such as improving the quality of teaching, can be addressed productively. He is well supported by other senior managers, in particular the deputy and assistant heads, and works productively with the LA. This enables wise decisions about the order and pace of improvements, ensuring that the changes have the best chance to embed. There is clarity about the school's critical path through the many challenges it still faces, avoiding the trap of trying to do everything at once. With the governing body, the headteacher is prudently adapting and updating the school improvement plan to take account of this. In most cases, the areas for improvement are being dealt with, or there is a clear plan to do so. The exception to this is in the Nursery where, although the weaknesses are recognised, the necessary radical management action has not been taken.

Leadership at all levels is being developed very well. The phase leader system works effectively, except in the Foundation Stage where the permanent leader is on maternity leave. Phase leaders know precisely what is expected of their role and are strongly committed. They are experiencing rapid professional development. The role and impact of curriculum leaders has improved well since the last monitoring inspection. These members of staff have varying levels of experience and expertise but are clear about what they have to do. They are positive and forward looking. Currently, however, there is too wide a variation in planning and assessment systems for different subjects.

The management of provision for pupils with LDD is satisfactory and has also improved since the last visit. However, management of provision for pupils with English as an additional language remains weak. There is not a clear enough strategic view of the range of needs of these pupils, or of how the resources available are best deployed to meet them. This applies across the whole school but, most particularly, in the Nursery where the need is at its greatest. The headteacher is aware of this problem and has begun to consider suitable strategies to improve the situation.

The governing body is active and continues to fulfil its duties well. It provides a good level of challenge and support to the head teacher and staff.

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

- Improve significantly the overall leadership, management and governance of the school – good progress

External support

The LA is providing very good support for the school in most respects and is instrumental in supporting the improvements in teaching. The link adviser provides valuable advice and challenge to improve. The LA is now evaluating the progress of the school well. In doing this, it has supported the headteacher and governors effectively in building the capacity of many members of the school staff to contribute to self-evaluation. However, the support provided by the LA in the Foundation Stage, whilst being helpful on a day-to-day basis, has not had sufficient strategic impact in the Nursery and needs to be urgently reviewed. The school is also not receiving all the help it currently needs to improve provision for pupils for whom English is an additional language.

Main Judgements

Progress since being subject to special measures – satisfactory.

Progress since the previous monitoring inspection – satisfactory.

Although the school has made much pleasing progress, especially in improving the quality of teaching, and inspectors have confidence in the school's capacity to continue to improve, both of the above judgements are lowered because of the current failure to bring about improvements in Nursery provision.

Newly qualified teachers may be appointed, except in the Foundation Stage. If any such members of staff are appointed, the school and LA must ensure that they receive well-planned opportunities, as part of the induction programme, to see examples of good and outstanding classroom practice.

Priorities for further improvement

- Improve very urgently the quality of provision in the Nursery and continue the improvements in Reception
- Continue the improvements in teaching across the school by ensuring that the good assessment data is much better used to ensure that work set is carefully targeted to challenge all pupils

- Improve the provision for pupils who have English as an additional language, so that they develop more quickly the language skills needed to gain full access to the curriculum

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