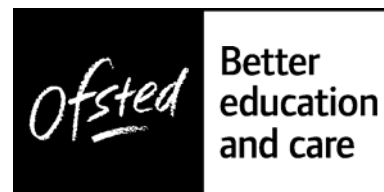


Prospects Learning Services Ltd
132-138 High Street
Bromley
Kent
BR1 1EZ

T 020 8313 7760
F 020 8464 3393

Ofsted helpline
08456 404045



3 February 2006

Mrs A Taylor
The Acting Headteacher
Little Stanmore Nursery, First & Middle
School
St David's Drive
Edgware
Middlesex
HA8 6JH

Dear Mrs Taylor

SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF LITTLE STANMORE NURSERY, FIRST & MIDDLE SCHOOL

Introduction

Following my visit with Sheila Nolan, Additional Inspector to your school on 17 and 18 January 2006, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the fourth monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures in 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 acting headteacher, nominated staff, groups of pupils, the chair of governors, and representatives from the local authority.

Context

The acting headteacher, who took up post at the beginning of the academic year, resigned at Christmas 2005 for personal reasons. The deputy headteacher assumed responsibility for the school as acting headteacher on 16 December 2005. The governing body is seeking to appoint a permanent headteacher as soon as possible.

Achievement and standards

The results of the 2005 national tests were evaluated in the previous letter. The publication of the national comparators in the autumn term makes clear that standards of attainment were close to national expectations in English, although there was evidence of some underachievement. Standards of attainment were noticeably lower in mathematics and science and pupil progress was well below expectation in mathematics. However, results in science were amongst those of the lowest performing schools nationally.

In lessons, standards of attainment are generally below average; however, a recent improvement in the quality of assessment information confirms that most pupils now make reasonable progress. Standards in English lessons are generally below or well below expectations. In Key Stage 2, the pupils produce good cursive script in handwriting books. However, the quality of presentation in their exercise books varies considerably and the writing produced on worksheets is often poorly formed. Subject specific vocabulary is often used accurately but many pupils struggle to develop these terms into coherent sentences. However, in a Year 5 lesson on legends, the development of descriptive vocabulary was extended effectively from antonyms to powerful adjectives. The pupils' reading skills vary significantly. Lessons provide opportunities for speaking and listening but teachers and support assistants do not always seek to develop higher level responses.

In mathematics, pupils' progress in Year 2 is at least satisfactory with able pupils attaining the higher level 3 for the first time. Similarly, Year 6 tracking data indicates that the majority of pupils are likely to meet their mathematics targets, including those higher attaining pupils aiming for Level 5. In Key Stage 1, most pupils have good number recognition and are able to look for patterns in numbers. Most have instant recall of numbers that make 10 but only the most able use this knowledge to help them in calculations that involve higher figures. In Year 3, when solving problems involving addition, many pupils rely heavily on a counting on strategy without fully understanding the necessary steps required. Multiplication facts are not secure in this year group. Too many pupils rely on inaccurate recall that is not underpinned by a secure understanding of multiplication as repeated addition. The present Year 6 have good mental and oral skills and can increasingly describe the strategies they use to reach solutions, using appropriate mathematical vocabulary. The school has identified strengths in the pupils' understanding of shape and space although there are weaknesses in areas such as data handling.

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 school is a calm and generally well-ordered place. The pupils' attitudes and behaviour have improved considerably and were satisfactory or better in almost all lessons. Movement around the school is supervised well. Senior managers have

taken well-considered steps to identify, support and challenge those pupils who were not conforming to the school's behaviour management policies and procedures. There were 31 short term exclusions in the autumn term, more than half of which involved violent or abusive behaviour. There were three permanent exclusions, following serious incidents. Attendance is well below average. This has been significantly affected by the pattern of exclusions and the poor attendance records of a small number of individuals. The local authority has failed to take resolute action with recalcitrant parents. If the figures for attendance are recalculated to discount these pupils, the school's attendance rate rises to within one percent point of the national average. Over a third of the pupils were able to record 100% attendance in the autumn term. Punctuality to school has improved significantly. The local authority admissions procedures have regularly offered places to pupils who live at some distance from the school. This policy has had a negative impact on the school's attendance figures.

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

- Improve attendance – satisfactory progress

Quality of provision

The quality of teaching has improved. Senior managers correctly judged the quality of teaching to be at least satisfactory throughout the school. Of the 17 lessons seen none were inadequate. Seven lessons were good, a slightly higher proportion than at the last visit. There was one outstanding lesson.

The best teaching was underpinned by high expectations and warm working relationships that made for good behaviour and positive attitudes to work. Lively and interesting activities matched the pupils' learning needs, for example in a Year 6 mathematics lesson on negative numbers. In other good lessons there was a strong emphasis on the development of speaking and listening skills so that pupils were encouraged to explain their thinking.

Most lessons benefited from the high number of classroom assistants and support staff. Their roles have been well developed, teacher direction is more coherent and most understand how best to deploy their skills to support both teachers and pupils. Group work was generally well used to match tasks and activities to the pupils' needs and earlier learning. However, in a number of otherwise satisfactory lessons, there were occasional groups of pupils who worked for too long without the benefit of adult interaction. As a result, some common errors and misunderstandings were not identified. Able pupils were not always sufficiently stretched and a few were unclear as to how to take their tasks forward. A lack of pace characterised some of these lessons.

The curriculum is effectively planned to meet all statutory requirements, including those for personal and social education. The school has rightly placed a strong emphasis on literacy and numeracy, while at the same time drawing on and celebrating the varied ethnic backgrounds of the pupils. However, the afternoon 'quick maths' and reading sessions intended to support identified weaknesses in test

results were not consistently implemented during the visit. The successful introduction of French in Years 4 to 7 has added to the pupils' enjoyment in learning.

A recent initiative, the Learning Zone, has been established to support those pupils with a range of educational needs, including behavioural and emotional challenges. Early outcomes have indicated positive results for some pupils. Nevertheless, too many pupils remain indefinitely in the same category of need without any measure of the impact of the support provided. A rigorous review of their progress is timely, particularly in view of the recent improvement in the assessment information available. The proportion of pupils with statements of special educational need is lower than might be expected from the assessment information now available. Within mainstream classes, pupils with statements were supported well by learning assistants. However, it was not always clear that the needs of other pupils with learning difficulties were taken into account in teachers' planning.

Very good use is made of specialist physical education instructors to support work-force remodelling while providing an outstanding curriculum experience for all pupils in Key Stage 2. This excellent tuition provides a major contribution to the Healthy Schools agenda whilst inspiring a vibrant competitive atmosphere in each class.

Effective whole-school assessment and tracking procedures have been introduced this academic year. Half-termly assessments have been recorded centrally and the data have been used to track the progress of individuals and groups of pupils, including those with learning difficulties and disabilities. The school recognises the need to link good whole-school systems with consistent classroom practice. Marking and planning are not consistent with the pupils' level-related targets. Most pupils were unaware of either their targets or of how well they were doing. Senior managers are seeking support from the local authority on level-related assessment.

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

- Improve the consistency of teaching as a matter of urgency – good progress

Leadership and management

Leadership and management are satisfactory. There have been noticeable improvements in the management of pupil behaviour, the use of assessment and the quality of teaching. During the autumn term 2005 the acting headteacher took effective steps to improve pupil behaviour; exclusion was used correctly and considerable emphasis was given to positive behaviour management. Similarly, a rigorous programme of lesson observation and support was completed with the assistance of the local authority. Recruitment and internal reorganisation brought expertise to a number of areas. Target setting is being developed and assessment data is used to evaluate pupils' progress. The 'Learning Zone', managed by the acting deputy headteacher, has provided positive support for pupils who find learning difficult. As part of this strategy the role of learning support staff has been managed more effectively than previously. Training and guidance has been

provided. The current senior leadership team have worked well together, made progress and improved the quality of provision.

The staff changes required in the autumn term placed limitations on the monitoring and evaluation work of subject coordinators. Training has been provided and revised roles and responsibilities are being developed. The coordination and delivery of provision for pupils with a statement of special educational is underdeveloped.

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 – good progress

External support

The local authority has worked hard to provide appropriate support for the many issues facing the school. Advanced Skills Teachers have been deployed to provide experience and advice in key areas. Financial support has been provided to stabilise the leadership and management of the school and a significant transition grant has been agreed to support the school for the next two years. The governing body have received advice and training. This programme of support has been well managed.

Main Judgements

Progress since being subject to special measures – satisfactory

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – good

Priorities for further improvement

- Continue to improve the use of assessment to inform teaching and learning.
- Improve the tracking of progress of those pupils with learning difficulties designated as in need of school action.
- Further improve the proportion of good teaching.

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