



20 February 2006

Mrs Tanya Watson
William Tyndale Primary School
Sable Street
Canonbury Road
London
N1 2AQ

Dear Mrs Watson

UNDERACHIEVING SCHOOLS: MONITORING INSPECTION OF WILLIAM TYNDALE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Introduction

Following my visit to your school on 25 and 26 January 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 was identified as underachieving in June 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

HMI observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher and senior managers, the chair of governors and the chairs of committees, groups of parents and pupils, and a representative from the local authority. HMI reported the findings of the inspection to the headteacher and senior managers, the chair of governors and a representative from the LEA at a meeting on the 26 January 2006.

Context

The headteacher took up post in September 2005 following her role as deputy headteacher in the school for the past three years. Both the deputy headteacher and inclusion manager were also appointed to their posts in September 2005. At the time of the inspection visit the number on roll was 433; pupils come from a very wide range of minority ethnic groups of which 210 are supported through specific funding. 35 per cent of pupils receive free

school meals, which is significantly higher than average. The number of pupils joining and leaving the school other than at the usual transfer time is high. The number of pupils identified as having special educational needs is broadly average, although the extent of need is very wide. The school is fully staffed following a period of some three years when there were many staffing changes. There is a well qualified and experienced team of teachers and teaching assistants throughout the school.

Achievement and standards

In 2005 the pupils achieved standards that were significantly above average by the end of Key Stage 2; the standards attained in English were particularly high. At the end of Key Stage 1 the standards attained were low, but had improved on those of 2004, especially in reading. The value added by the school in the provision made was outstanding from the end of Key Stage 1 to the end of Key Stage 2 in 2005. Individual groups of pupils, including those who have special educational needs, achieve as well as the pupils do overall. The pupils for whom English is an additional language do particularly well in the early years of Key Stage 2, as their ability to understand and use spoken and written English becomes more accurate and fluent. The very high proportion of pupils entering the nursery with very limited spoken English goes some way to account for the end-of-Key Stage 1 test results, especially in reading and writing. The school has introduced some excellent intervention strategies to enable the pupils to learn and use English with greater fluency through reading, phonic and spelling programmes. The lessons observed during the inspection were in the Foundation Stage of Learning and Key Stage 1. Pupils' attainment in the lessons in Reception, and Key Stage 1 was at least at the levels expected for their age. The school's tracking systems show clear evidence of the majority of pupils making steady to good progress throughout the Foundation Stage to the end of Year 2, and the pupils are on target to reach the improved levels of attainment predicted in the end-of-Key Stage 1 tests in 2006. For example, pupils in Year 2 had a secure knowledge and understanding of the healthy foods they should eat in science, and Year 1 pupils made good progress in plotting out their routes from home to school in geography. Pupils have made good progress in developing their reading skills from entry to reception to the end of Year 2, particularly in using key words, phonics and blends, and contextual and picture clues to help them read unfamiliar words. The very strong focus on teaching pupils to read using systematic and consistent schemes and procedures is paying dividends in raising the reading standards and the pupils' interest in books.

Personal development and well-being

The pupils have positive attitudes to learning. They settle quickly, work with enthusiasm and have good relationships with each other and with adults. In the lessons observed, the pupils were interested in their work and engaged with the tasks from the outset.

The improvement in the behaviour of pupils in and around the school noted in the report of June 2005 has continued and strengthened further. The great majority of pupils are friendly, open and welcoming, treating each other, staff and visitors with courtesy and respect. They are very good ambassadors for the school and take a real interest in the well being of younger pupils. While incidents of over robust play may still sometimes occur, pupils say they enjoy playtime and in the main this is an opportunity for meeting with friends, playing and socialising. The playground space is very limited which restricts the range of activities requiring space, such as team ball games. Pupils are excited about their involvement in decision making; members of the School Council are taking a leading role in this and are eager to discuss their plans with friends and visitors.

The early morning Breakfast Club, provides those pupils who attend with a very good start to the day. It is well attended and pupils are very positive about the choice of healthy foods they have to eat.

One music assembly was seen. This was a delightful occasion which afforded a valuable time in the day for pupils and staff to come together and reaffirm the core values and sense of community central to the school's provision.

Quality of provision

The quality of education is good overall; in some lessons observed the teaching had several very good features. The teachers plan in appropriate detail, use resources effectively and organise their classrooms well. The learning environment in the classrooms and around the school is enhanced by the many stimulating displays of pupils' work in corridors and on classroom walls. The lessons seen were lively and the pupils were provided with challenging and interesting tasks. For example, in a well taught mathematics lesson in a reception class, the pupils had many good opportunities to investigate and explore length and different ways of measuring objects.

In the Foundation Stage the recently introduced tracking systems and records kept of pupils' progress towards the Early Learning Goals are appropriately detailed, and use of incidental opportunities are made to assess pupils' skills as they play. Some of these assessments are particularly good and pinpoint key steps in learning, but others are more focused on the pupils' general behaviour and interest. The transition to Key Stage 1 is well managed, with assessments made against Early Learning Goals or National Curriculum levels as appropriate. In the rest of the school there are thorough assessment systems in English and mathematics, and developing records for other subjects. Information from these assessments is used well not only to provide targets for individual pupils but also to identify gaps in coverage, and revise the programmes of work as necessary to make sure that these gaps are covered. For example, to track the progress of those pupils for whom English is an additional language. Teachers keep records in a consistent and systematic way, in line with the school policy; there are examples of excellent record keeping for example, in a Year 6 class. Samples of writing are regularly assessed against detailed criteria related to National Curriculum levels and pupils have clear targets to improve their writing. During a meeting with a group of pupils, individuals were able to explain their targets, some knew the level they were aiming to improve to, for example, from Level 4B to 4A in writing, and were very clear about what they needed to do to achieve the higher level. A well structured assessment programme is in place and assessment weeks are held termly to enable the staff to keep very careful records of pupils' ongoing progress.

Useful work has gone into planning and writing the curriculum, determining school policies, providing in-service training for teachers and establishing a number of effective monitoring procedures. The headteacher's and senior managers' evaluations of teaching and learning, through teachers' plans, scrutinising pupils' work, and from regular classroom observations is now well-established and accurately identifies the key development points to enable the teachers to improve the quality of their lessons.

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

- improve overall progress for children in the younger age classes by:
 - gathering clearer information about how well children are doing and by making better use of it
 - ensuring that children know what they need to do to improve further,
 - good progress has been made.

Leadership and management

The headteacher is a very good leader and manager; she is effectively supported by the deputy headteacher and inclusion manager. The senior managers are a strong team who have lost no time continuing to implement the required, identified improvements to eliminate pockets of underachievement and raise pupils' attainment throughout the school. The headteacher is successfully developing a team of teaching and support staff who are committed to the school's further improvement, including a sharp focus on pupils' learning and achievement. The school's self-evaluation accurately identifies the strengths and areas for development required throughout the school, and sets the correct priorities for further improvement. The senior managers have taken a key role in providing good quality training and development for the staff, including the support staff.

The governors have a secure understanding of their roles and responsibilities. The chair is well informed and works closely with the headteacher to assess the progress being made. Governors are increasingly involved in the school and are looking for further ways to involve the parents in the life of the school.

External support

The LEA has continued to provide good support to the school. Well thought out plans to provide appropriate training are in place, for example, to develop the roles of the middle managers.

Main Judgements

The school has made good progress in dealing with the causes of underachievement.

Priorities for further improvement

- continue to focus on tracking pupils' attainment throughout the school. Extend the systems in place to include identifying and monitoring the degree of mobility in each cohort and the rate of progress the EAL learners make from the nursery to the end of Year 2.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the chair of governors and the Director of Children Services for Islington.

Yours sincerely

Juliet Ward
H M Inspector