



11 July 2006

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 with George Rayner, Additional Inspector, Jennifer Hall, Additional Inspector, and Lynn Bappa, Additional Inspector, to your school on 28 and 29 June 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 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 and scrutinised documents. Focus group meetings were undertaken with pupils from the year councils and selected staff. The headteacher and consultant head joined the team meetings and discussions were held with other key members of staff. A representative from the local authority (LA) also joined the team for the first day and meetings were held with some heads of departments.

Context

The senior leadership team has been split into two groups to focus on implementation and improvement separately. In addition the school has

established four development groups to lead change in key areas. These groups make recommendations to the improvement group which agrees the recommendations and passes them to the implementation groups to ensure they happen.

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards have improved. The evidence indicates that the proportion of pupils gaining Level 5 and 6 are increasing in all core subjects by the end of Key Stage 3 and the test results received so far in mathematics support this. The targets for Level 5 were almost met and those for Level 6 were exceeded. GCSE results will be reported on the next visit, when the results of external examinations are available.

Personal development and well-being

The development group for inclusion has made a good start towards improving the ethos of the school. Several initiatives are beginning to bear fruit, although there is still a long way to go.

There are improved opportunities for students to take responsibility and the school has started to look at ways to make them feel more involved in school life through, for example, celebrating their achievements. However, there are tensions amongst teachers about how best to manage behaviour. Some believe that sanctions are the most effective method and others consider that the school should focus more on rewarding the positive. Some students also raised concerns about this. Representatives of the year councils told inspectors that some teachers do not always treat them fairly and respectfully or value their opinions. These tensions need to be addressed if the school is to move forward.

There are too few opportunities for social development and this is made worse by the very short lunch break.

Quality of provision

There is now energy and drive to improve the quality of teaching and learning and the pace of change has therefore increased. A new programme of coaching has been well supported by a significant minority of teachers, and is beginning to have a positive impact in lessons. The programme is well led and benefits from a strong link with the local authority. The teaching and

learning development group in charge of the coaching programme, and a focus group of pupils, have both identified the need for pupils to be more actively engaged lessons. They consider, and inspectors agree, that the limited opportunity for pupils' active involvement in lessons is a major barrier to improving teaching and learning. The pupils spend too much time listening passively and not enough time interacting with each other and the teachers.

The coaching programme is one of several strands related to the school's strategy for improving teaching, including mentoring and performance management programmes. The interface between these strands need to be clearer to ensure staff receive clear and unambiguous messages about what needs to be done to improve the quality of teaching.

The development group established for the curriculum 14-19 has made an enthusiastic start and there are optimistic signs that the pace of change will increase. The team is currently engaged in auditing the curriculum to identify opportunities for developing vocational courses. A 'flexi-learning' alternative curriculum for a small number of pupils in Years 10 and 11 is a good and relevant development. A broader range of catering courses is at an advanced stage of planning.

Examination results are being analysed in more detail and this information is being used more effectively to plan the curriculum and identify pupils in danger of underachieving. The school is also making more reliable predictions and targets.

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 – satisfactory progress since the last visit.
- Provide a curriculum that is appropriate to pupils' needs and abilities and gives them more planned opportunities to develop spiritual and cultural awareness – satisfactory progress in planning improvements to the curriculum.
- Develop a process for monitoring pupils' academic progress so that they can be set challenging targets for improvement – satisfactory progress.

Leadership and management

Good steps have been taken this term to improve leadership and management and as a result the pace of improvements has increased since the last monitoring visit. A large number of senior staff are leaving and the new organisation of the leadership team has served to manage the transition to a new team. Weaknesses have been addressed rigorously and senior staff have been held to account more effectively for the outcomes of their work. However, the school is still not yet where it should be since it was made subject to special measures and there is still a long way to go in relation to many aspects of school life.. Accountability at middle management and class teacher level is variable and insecure. For example, the school is charged with providing more opportunities for social development. It is unclear how changes in this area will be noticed and evaluated, and how teachers' efforts to achieve this will be recognised and rewarded.

Good inroads have been made into the areas where there is resistance to improvement. Most staff at all levels are now expressing greater commitment to making changes. A large number have volunteered to be part of the new development groups. These groups are well led and managed and have consequently resulted in some effective plans for improvements. There is now a clear agenda for change and the schools capacity to improve is increasing.

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 – satisfactory progress.

External support

The partnership with the LA has improved considerably. The amended action plan details more substantial support for the school and includes better information about expected improvements. The consultant support for the 14-19 curriculum group has been helpful in highlighting good practice in other schools, however the work now needs to prioritise the most important developments more rigorously. The human resources officer has also made an important contribution, although the number of days promised by the LA has not materialised. The adviser working on the coaching programme has been invaluable. There is a much greater commitment to improving the fabric of the buildings. This was highlighted by some staff as an important area for development.

Overall there remains insufficient clarity about how the LA will know how effective their support is. There are not enough regular meetings between the school and those supporting the school to review progress and re-evaluate the levels and nature of support to ensure the challenging targets they have set will be achieved.

Main Judgements

Progress since being subject to special measures – inadequate

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – satisfactory

Priorities for further improvement

- Develop the systems for holding staff to account to ensure that they focus on the school's main priorities for improvement
- Provide more interesting opportunities for pupils to work with each other through discussion and activities.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the chair of governors and the Director for Children's Services, Barking and Dagenham.

Yours sincerely

Ann Berger
H M Inspector