



5 July 2006

Ms Rebecca Thomas
Brook Community School
Sigdon Road
Hackney
London
E8 1AS

Dear Ms Thomas

FRESH START: MONITORING INSPECTION OF BROOK COMMUNITY SCHOOL

Introduction

Following my visit to your school with Lauren Ovenden HMI on 21 and 22 June 2006, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the third monitoring inspection since the school opened in March 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

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, members of the leadership team, a representative from the Hackney Learning Trust, and with groups of pupils.

Context

Construction work has been completed and contractors have left the site. The ICT network infrastructure has been completed and all but one classroom has had an interactive whiteboard installed. The outside areas are being developed and a tree has been planted for each class. The window replacement programme has been approved in principle by the London Borough of Hackney and will be managed through the borough's capital

programme. The first phase is planned to start later this year. One teacher has left the school since the previous monitoring inspection in March 2006.

Achievement and standards

The school's assessment information and inspectors scrutiny of the pupils work shows that most pupils are making satisfactory progress. As a result of this progress the gap that exists for many between the standards they achieve and the standards expected for their ages is narrowing. Teachers are now making better use of assessment information to plan to meet the needs of different groups of pupils. However, this practice is not consistent across all classes. The reading project in Key Stage 1 is continuing to have a positive impact on improving reading and raising the pupils' self-esteem. It was apparent that pupils in Year 6 also enjoyed opportunities to work with volunteer reading partners from UBS bank and that these lunch time sessions are helping to develop the pupils' self-esteem and promote achievement.

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

- develop the use of assessment information to provide a better match of tasks to the pupils' needs and prior attainment - satisfactory progress.

Personal development and well-being

Pupils' attitudes and behaviour were at least satisfactory in most lessons and good or better in over half. Overall, pupils demonstrate good attitudes to learning in lessons, with pupils participating enthusiastically. They demonstrate good listening skills, although at times, pupils do not question when they are uncertain of what they need to do and do not work as well as they could. Most work well in group and paired work and most are considerate of others as they move around the school. Pupils commented that behaviour had improved, although they do think that they could be nicer to each other. Pupils enjoy attending school. Attendance has improved and the current attendance figure is around 94%.

The provision for pupils' social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is good. Pupils are encouraged to develop greater spiritual awareness through the recognition of religious festivals and regular reflection, in assemblies and through other curriculum activities. For example, in an art lesson, pupils were encouraged to reflect upon their memories and to explore the idea of

personal space. The SEAL project is effective in encouraging pupils to develop good social and moral awareness. Pupils comment very favourably on the opportunities to discuss their feelings and feel safe in school. They are confident that teachers will tackle any issues with behaviour or bullying and that rewards and sanctions are applied fairly. They know right from wrong. They are supportive of new pupils joining the school and regularly celebrate the diversity of cultures within the school. For example, the school celebrated Australia Day and in one registration, pupils replied in many different languages.

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

- involve pupils more actively in assessing their own learning – satisfactory progress.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning was satisfactory or better in all of the lessons observed, with three quarters of the lessons being good.

In the best lessons, careful planning leads to clear lesson objectives that enable pupils to assess their learning. Lesson activities are varied and are carefully matched to the needs of different groups, based on a good knowledge of their prior attainment. The recent focus on using assessment to support learning has resulted in pupils being involved in assessing their own performance at the end of each session; however, the effectiveness of this is variable.

In the less effective lessons, lesson objectives do not provide a clear picture of the next steps for learning or provide pupils with clear criteria to assess their success. In these lessons, planning is not sufficiently matched to pupil's needs and there is not enough time spent checking that all pupils understand what they need to do, particularly in group work.

Teachers have accurate assessment data for reading, writing and mathematics and are able to track the pupils' progress and identify those pupils who are at risk of underachieving.

The new ICT suite and clusters of computers in classrooms are being used well to support learning. Teachers make appropriate use of interactive whiteboards in teaching, although these were not used interactively by pupils

in the lessons observed. Provision for personal, social, health and citizenship education is satisfactory and improving. Pupils in Year 5 and 6 have participated in a Citizenship day that promoted their financial awareness and the school has planned to extend this to include other year groups. The SEAL project has been effectively embedded within the curriculum, resulting in pupils being more comfortable to talk about their feelings and to explore personal issues.

The school has implemented appropriate strategies to support vulnerable pupils. Its arrangements for child protection and to safeguard learners are secure and effective. The school has built upon the good relationships established with external agencies and now meets regularly with relevant partners to ensure a coherent approach to support.

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

- raise expectations and increase the level of challenge, particularly for the most able – satisfactory progress.

Leadership and management

Rigorous and accurate self-evaluation has resulted in plans to restructure the leadership team to meet the needs of the school as it moves into the next phase of its development. Guidance and support provided by senior leaders and local authority advisers has had a positive impact on improving the capacity of subject leaders and this is beginning to be a significant factor in improving the quality of teaching and learning throughout the school. Training and support has enabled middle leaders to begin to monitor and evaluate standards and achievement in their subjects more effectively and the resulting data is being analysed to identify strengths and areas for development. Lesson monitoring has had a stronger focus on what the pupils have learnt and useful feedback following observation of their lessons is helping teachers to improve their planning, so that there is a sharper focus on assessing what the pupils have learnt and what they should do next. The school has developed very good inclusive systems and procedures for the induction of pupils who join the school at various points during the school year.

External support

The school has negotiated a school/consultant support agreement with the Hackney Learning Trust so that support is more closely matched to the needs of the school. Teachers said that they value the support they have been given.

Main Judgements

The school's overall progress is satisfactory.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the chair of governors and the Chief Education Officer for Hackney and the Hackney Learning Trust.

Yours sincerely

Robert Ellis
H M Inspector