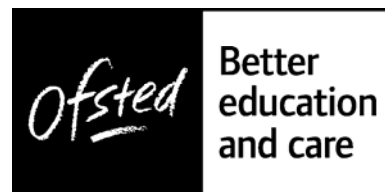


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11 May 2006

Mr J Shaw
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Dear Mr Shaw

SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF PARK VIEW PRIMARY SCHOOL

Introduction

Following my visit with Ronald Bulman and Ian Thompson, Additional Inspectors, to your school on 9 and 10 May 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 became subject to special measures in November 2005.

This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website.

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the acting headteacher, nominated senior staff, a group of pupils, the chair of governors, the co-ordinator for special education needs and representatives from the local authority (LA). Informal discussions were held with other members of staff and with pupils.

Context

Staffing is more stable than it was at the time of the inspection in November. The acting headteacher, who joined the school shortly before the inspection in 2005, has continued in post and a new deputy headteacher was appointed in January 2006. Nevertheless, five of the thirteen classes are taught by temporary teachers and some non-teaching staff are absent.

Achievement and standards

In 2005, too few pupils achieved as well as they could have in the national tests at Key Stages 1 and 2. Results in mathematics at Key Stage 2 were particularly weak; only around a third of pupils achieved the expected level. Since then, the rate of progress made by pupils has accelerated. Standards are rising from last year's low levels, particularly in mathematics at Key Stage 2, although they remain below average overall. Pupils made satisfactory or better progress in nearly all lessons, although the pace of learning is still too slow in some instances. This is often attributable to either gaps in the pupils' prior learning or to unsettled behaviour.

Pupils enter the Foundation Stage with skills and abilities well below average. Language skills are particularly poorly developed, although the mathematical skills and knowledge of pupils are stronger. When their low starting point is taken into consideration, they are beginning to make good progress overall. The redeployment of an early years specialist is having a positive impact on the youngest pupils' learning.

Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD) are also now making better progress than they were at the time of the previous inspection. Individual education plans are mostly sharply focused and teaching assistants ensure that the needs of pupils with LDD are met. In some classes, however, the more able pupils are set work that is too easy.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in November 2006:

- raise standards and pupils' achievement across the school especially in English and mathematics – satisfactory

Personal development and well-being

Pupils' personal development remains satisfactory and is not an area of concern. Many pupils like coming to school, feel safe and enjoy school life, including extra-curricular activities. Attendance is improving, although it is still lower than average.

The impact of the school's emphasis on improving behaviour is beginning to be seen. School council members appreciate the more harmonious conduct around the school. Behaviour is generally satisfactory, although pupils' maturity, compliance and initiative vary. In class, many pupils listen carefully and are confident in asking and answering questions, but others switch off during lengthy presentations. Some lessons suffer from low-level disruption by a few pupils. Pupils work and socialise within a firm framework of rewards

and sanctions and friction is promptly resolved. Key elements of a positive whole-school ethos are now in place and ready for further development.

The number of incidents of disruption during class time has declined. There have been no permanent exclusions and the number of short-term ones has reduced of late.

Quality of provision

Teaching was mostly satisfactory or better. In the best lessons, teachers set and insisted on clear standards of behaviour. The result was an effective learning atmosphere in which pupils made good progress. Planning provided a variety of activities that maintained pace and interest. Pupils with LDD were supported well and also made good progress. Teachers questioned well and this made pupils think.

In other lessons, the pace of learning slowed when pupils became unsettled, either because the lesson failed to grab the pupils' interest or because the pupils' behaviour was not managed well enough. In one lesson, weaknesses in prior knowledge in literacy slowed the pupils' rate of progress. While teaching assistants were involved in planning, they did not always participate in lessons enough.

Teachers' use of assessment was too variable across the school. At its best, teachers had a clear view of how well pupils were doing and continuous checks were made to ensure that pupils understood their work. Additional challenge was provided for those who learned more quickly. However, in some classes, pupils did not know how well they were doing or what they needed to do to improve.

A notable feature of the school's work is the Intensifying Support Project (ISP), led by the LA. This is bringing about more consistency in the way literacy and mathematics are taught although variation remains, particularly in the management of the pupils' behaviour and lesson planning.

Increasingly purposeful relationships between staff and pupils are creating a more positive, inclusive ambience in school. Many pupils make contributions to their school community as monitors, play leaders or through the school council. These perceptive, articulate pupils appreciate significant improvements in their learning and personal welfare. They confidently take their concerns to teachers, their assistants or to appointed 'buddies'.

Teachers' knowledge of pupils' needs is satisfactory overall, but differs according to the length of time they have served in the school. A number of

assessment systems have been introduced. The school now has much detailed data on pupils' progress derived from increasingly regular marking, assessment weeks and the tracking of pupils' attainment. The efficiency of these systems varies, however, and they require increased co-ordination for effective whole-school application.

Pupils at risk of underachieving receive good support and guidance, which keep most engaged and productive. Teachers use praise and sanctions satisfactorily to maintain pupils' involvement. There is a range of displays and supportive prompts in classrooms designed to help pupils' learning. Teachers create good individual education plans, and have recourse to efficient support systems for learning difficulties, disabilities and behavioural problems. Teachers refer to external specialist agencies as and when required.

The involvement of parents in their children's education has also increased, particularly through meetings and clear, regular letters home.

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

- raising the proportion of good or better teaching so that it enables all pupils to make good progress - satisfactory
- implementing systems to assess and track accurately pupils' progress, and using the information to direct future action - satisfactory
- ensuring that the support available to pupils helps them to understand how they can improve their work - satisfactory

Leadership and management

The strong leadership provided by the acting headteacher has given a clear direction for the school and re-established good relationships. Staff morale is much improved. There is a greater sense of teamwork evident among staff. In turn, this is developing a positive and happier ethos in the school, which has laid the foundation for sustainable future improvement.

A suitable emphasis has been placed on improving the pupils' behaviour, in addition to the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in November 2005. The new 'behaviour for learning' policy is beginning to pay dividends and bring about improvements in the pupils' attitudes to learning. This is evident in the conduct of the pupils in and around the school. While staff have worked hard to improve behaviour, the policy is not applied consistently in all classes.

A new senior management team has been created, with broadly identified responsibilities. However, it meets infrequently and no-one has been

identified as having overall responsibility for assessment. Subject managers are in place for all curriculum areas but they do not monitor progress in their subjects and their responsibilities need further clarification.

The other issues adversely affecting the performance of pupils have been tackled determinedly. For example, staff absence has reduced and there is a stronger sense of stability in the school. A particularly helpful development was the redeployment of an early years specialist to the Nursery.

A number of development plans have been drawn up, such as those for special educational needs and information and communication technology. These are helping to improve pupils' achievement but do not yet form part of a single school improvement plan.

The school's own arrangements for monitoring of teaching and learning are modest. Teachers' planning is monitored effectively by the deputy headteacher but monitoring of teaching and learning at the school has been led by officers of the LA.

Five new governors have been appointed and they bring with them a wide range of skills. As well as being supportive of the headteacher, governors are beginning to act as a critical friend of the school. The chair of governors has timely plans to develop a new vision for the school. Procedures for the statutory performance management of teaching staff are not fully in place although there are suitable plans to introduce these for the next academic year.

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

- establishing a strong, stable and positive team providing coherent leadership and management - satisfactory

External support

Following the publication of the inspection report in November 2005 the LA reacted swiftly and a comprehensive programme of support for the school was put in place. The LA has drawn on a wide range of its services, including personnel and finance. It has resourced the increasingly effective ISP and the school greatly values the close links with the LA's school improvement partners. LA officers meet regularly with the school leadership to monitor and discuss the school's progress.

The LA's statement of action is good and complies with DFES guidelines. It is ambitious in its view of when the school will be removed from special measures and recognises that the high level of support the school receives needs to continue if this goal is to be realised on time.

Two local school collaboratives have supported the school well, and a local special school is providing additional support at lunchtime.

Main Judgements

Progress since being subject to special measures – satisfactory.

Quality of LA's statement of action – good.

Newly qualified teachers may only be appointed following the agreement of the lead inspector.

Priorities for further improvement

- Strengthen management by developing a robust and rigorous internal system for the monitoring of teaching and learning.
- Ensure consistency in applying the new behaviour for learning policy.
- Further clarify management responsibilities.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the chair of governors and the Director of Children's Services for Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council.

Yours sincerely

Michael McIlroy
H M Inspector