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Mrs H Beeken
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Dear Mrs Beeken

SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION ST PAUL'S COMMUNITY PRIMARY AND NURSERY SCHOOL

Introduction

Following my visit with Keith Edwards, Additional Inspector to your school on 4 and 5 July 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 January 2006.

This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website.

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, senior management team (SMT), other school staff, groups of pupils, the vice-chair accompanied by an additional governor and representatives of the local authority (LA). Using this evidence, inspectors made the following observations to the headteacher, deputy headteacher, vice-chair of governors and representatives of the LA.

Context

The school was placed in special measures following its section 5 inspection in January 2006. The Year 2 teacher resigned in December 2005. Following a lengthy recruitment campaign a permanent teacher of suitable quality has been appointed from September 2006. Currently, pupils continue to be taught

by two part time temporary teachers. This arrangement will continue until July 2006. In addition, the Year 4 teacher was injured in a road traffic accident just prior to the school's inspection in January. The class was taught by a number of supply teachers in the short term. This created instability. However, from the end of February, until the teacher's return in May 2006, the class was taught by one supply teacher who provided consistency. The secretary resigned at the end of April. Permanent appointments of Senior Administrator and Administrative Assistant have been in place since June 2006.

Achievement and standards

Standards of attainment are below average at both Key Stages. The unvalidated results of the 2006 national tests show that standards at Key Stage 1 have improved in reading and writing. They are lower in mathematics because higher attaining pupils are not achieving as well as they should. At the end of Key Stage 2, standards are lower in mathematics and science. They are similar to the outcomes of 2005 in English. Standards of the brightest pupils are too low throughout the school. Inspection findings, end of Key Stage outcomes and the school's own assessment data confirm that significant numbers of pupils are underachieving in reading, writing and mathematics. For example, by Year 5, analysis shows too many pupils are not performing as well as they should be. Although there are pockets of improvement in some classes, this is not consistent across the school. This picture is confirmed in books and the progress made in lessons where standards are below those expected for their age. Although the rate of progress is satisfactory in most lessons, it is rarely good. The gains made by pupils need to be brisker if the gap between what pupils are attaining and what they are capable of is to close. Pupils identified for additional support make good progress due to high quality targeted support from teaching assistants and mentors.

Personal development and well-being

The pupils' personal development is strongly supported by recent initiatives to improve behaviour, attendance and social inclusion. The pupils have responded well to the range of activities provided at break times, and, under the watchful gaze of caring support staff they have learned to make the most of their playtimes and be ready for their next lessons. Pupil exclusions have been reduced to a minimum. Through careful liaison with support services, the school has successfully integrated pupils from a range of different ethnicities and supported their learning. Attendance rates have improved steadily and are now in line with the national average. The school has developed a closer working partnership with the parents and the community to strengthen the opportunities for the pupils.

Most pupils are attentive in class and have developed positive attitudes to learning. They listen well, and work well in pairs and in small groups. However, they take little pride in how their written work appears and their books are marred by poor presentation.

Quality of provision

The quality of teaching remains variable. Fifteen lessons were observed: 4 were good, 8 were satisfactory and 3 were inadequate. Although much teaching is satisfactory, this is insufficient to accelerate the progress pupils make. There is a commitment by all staff to raise standards. Many new strategies have been introduced since the last inspection to improve teaching, including sharing with pupils what they will learn in each lesson and setting clear targets for improvement. Although these strategies have the potential to improve standards, they are not always used effectively. For example, some teachers use 'talking partner' activities indiscriminately because they feel it is something they need to do. The ineffective use of this strategy results in some lessons losing pace and pupil's progress slowing.

In the best teaching, pupils are given a clear understanding of what they will learn during a session and how this fits into their previous learning. Explanations and instructions are clear and effective. Questioning is used well to assess pupils' understanding and they are encouraged to express their ideas. Pupils are encouraged to work together and discuss their ideas, which enhance the overall learning experience. Teachers have good classroom management which contributes to the good working atmosphere. Where teaching is satisfactory, teacher-led activities are over-lengthy with too much time is devoted to listening to instructions. As a result, pupils lose interest and become passive when questions and work do not encourage them think or participate. Sometimes, opportunities for using the interactive whiteboard to model and demonstrate are missed. Pupils are not given enough opportunities to develop different learning styles, including ones where they can explore ideas and solve problems. For example, in a good lesson on equivalent fractions, pupils played the game of 'pairs'. Learning opportunities could have been increased by sharing strategies with pupils to quicken the pace of learning. Without these, the game was too random, which resulted in slower progress.

Throughout the school adults have positive relationships. Teaching assistants are generally used effectively. They support pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities well.

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

- Raise standards and achievement in English, mathematics and science by improving the quality of teaching throughout the school, to reach at least satisfactory levels - inadequate progress.

Procedures to assess and track pupil's progress in English, mathematics and science have been introduced reflecting a considerable amount of work on the part of staff. They provide a means of measuring pupil's attainment at regular intervals, with results carefully recorded and shared with teachers. With the data so far collected, the school has established a reasonably good basis for analysing pupil's progress. This is helpful in highlighting within each subject the progress pupils are making. However, these are still in the early stages of development and have yet to fully impact on raising standards and achievement. Assessment information is also used to set targets in English and mathematics and these are clearly displayed in all classrooms. Pupils are aware of their targets although some are unsure of how to achieve them. Teacher's marking in some year groups is regular and mainly affirmative but is not adding to the assessment of pupil's work. Little is done to help pupils know what they have achieved or what they need to do next. In addition, the standard of presentation in pupil's work varies considerably and is sometimes poor, reflecting low teacher expectations and a lack of pace and rigour in learning.

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

- Establish effective assessment and tracking procedures and use the data gained to provide challenging targets and work for all pupils - inadequate progress.

Leadership and management

Senior managers have made satisfactory progress in monitoring and evaluating the work of the school. The school has accepted the need for change and has been receptive to informed professional guidance. The senior management team and governors have developed a more strategic approach to school improvement and have started the process of bringing about the necessary improvements.

Through careful analysis of the issues raised in the last inspection report, and sensitive support from the local authority, the school has developed a clear plan of action and has stiffened the resolve of staff and governors to raise standards. The school's action plan is appropriate; it addresses all the areas for development from the inspection report. The four key issues are subdivided into 13 action points, or targets, which provide greater clarity about what needs to be done to secure improvement. For each element of the plan, a series of appropriate strategies and actions is identified. Objectives are clearly stated and success criteria are mostly measurable. Time lines against each

individual action provide the school with a useful framework to monitor progress. Strategic dates are set against interim milestones for evaluating each

key issue which appropriately set the pace for improvement. They also provide a clear indication of how each objective will be achieved and ensure that individual activities are manageable within the whole plan. There is a necessary concentration of activity from May 2006 to April 2007. The plan provides sufficient information about who will monitor progress. Resource costs and sources of funding have been clearly identified.

Staff morale has improved and subject leaders have accepted the responsibility of improving the pupils' performance. The introduction of improved assessment procedures has enabled staff to have an accurate view of the pupils' progress in English and mathematics and has confirmed that standards need to be much higher, particularly for the more able pupils. With the support of LA consultants, they are beginning to take on more responsibility including classroom observation, discussing with pupils and monitoring their work. However, the impact of their work is at an early stage. The school now holds an accurate view of the strengths and weaknesses in the quality of teaching and has identified where additional support is needed. For example, the headteacher's self-evaluation of progress to date is thorough and accurate. It has been significant in informing and clarifying future developments for both the senior leadership team and the governing body. Governors have become much more active in providing appropriate challenge to the leadership of the school based on a developing knowledge of the school's strengths and weaknesses.

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

- Improve leadership and management at all levels by ensuring that the headteacher, senior management team and subject co-ordinators monitor the work more rigorously - satisfactory progress.
- Establish and promote governors' involvement and influence so that they can contribute more effectively to monitoring and evaluating the school's performance - satisfactory progress

External support

The LA's commentary and statement of action is clear and appropriate. It includes relevant judgements about the need for the school in the locality. It

recognises the need to improve the quality of education rather than consider its closure and provide structured support for governors. The LA identifies the extra support that is to be provided and does not intend to suspend the school's right to have a delegated budget.

The school is well supported by the LA. A number of initiatives have been introduced, including the Intensifying Support programme (ISP), good quality consultant support as well as staff and governor training. There has been appropriate challenge for the senior management team and governors who have a shared vision and determination to work together for improvement. This support has been a driving force for change. Work has begun to improve teaching and learning, but the progress that pupils make as a result of this work is not yet increasing quickly enough.

Main Judgements

Progress since being subject to special measures - inadequate.

Quality of LA's statement of action - satisfactory.

Newly qualified teachers may not be appointed.

Priorities for further improvement

- Increase the proportion of good teaching.
- Continue to raise standards and achievement in English, mathematics and science, especially those of the higher attainers, so that the progress pupils make is accelerated.
- Develop further the use of assessment and tracking procedures and use the outcomes to identify barriers to pupils making progress so that effective action can be taken.
- Improve the quality and consistency of marking so that it informs pupils what they need to do next to improve.
- Improve the standards of presentation in all subjects throughout the school.

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

Yours sincerely

Paul Weston
Her Majesty's Inspector