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14 December 2006

Mrs S. Sanderson
Headteacher
Brookfield School
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Poulton-le-fylde
Lancashire
FY6 7HE

Dear Mrs Sanderson,

SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF BROOKFIELD SCHOOL

Introduction

Following my visit with Angela Headon HMI and Alastair Younger, Additional Inspector, to your school on 12 December 2006, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the fifth monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures in February 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, scrutinised documents and met with senior staff, representatives of the local authority, the chair of governors, students and a parent. Fourteen lessons, two assemblies, registration periods and activities at break and lunchtime were observed.

Context

The previously acting headteacher has accepted the post on a permanent basis. In addition two new teachers, including a senior teacher, have joined the staff and four of the seven learning support assistants are new appointments. An additional teacher has been appointed and will join the staff in January 2007.

Achievement and standards

Attainment is well below average reflecting the students' social, emotional and behavioural difficulties and the resultant disruptions to their education. In addition, a number of students have significant learning difficulties.

Many Year 9 students missed the statutory tests at the end of Key Stage 3 in 2006. All the students who sat tests attained Level 4, the standard expected for 11-year-olds. In a few instances this reflected an improvement on the students' results in statutory tests three years earlier. In an effort to increase the available accreditation the six Year 10 students were entered for entry-level qualifications in English and mathematics. Four gained passes in English but none in mathematics. The six Year 11 students also sat entry-level examinations; all passed science and design and technology, four passed English, but none passed mathematics. Six students were entered for GCSE examinations in 2006. All passed English, English literature, and science and three also passed mathematics. Grades were mainly at the lower end of the scale, the highest being grade C for science. Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 is above the average of other similar schools within the local authority.

It is not possible to judge accurately the long-term progress of many students because external assessment data is not consistently available and internal assessment has not always been accurate. In almost all lessons students were making satisfactory progress, but in many lessons a substantial number of students were not present because of absence or exclusion or because they had been withdrawn for work elsewhere. The frequency of these events is slowing progress because it is interfering with the continuity of learning.

Personal development and well-being

The attitudes of the majority of students have improved. There has been a reduction in the use of foul and abusive language around school and in lessons; it is now a rare occurrence. Most students are behaving well in lessons. In the best lessons students show interest and enjoyment in the work and are keen to make progress. They respond politely to the staff and work well independently. However, in some lessons students continue to behave inappropriately, fail to engage with the task and are rude and disrespectful to the staff.

The atmosphere in assemblies is calm, with students listening politely and responding to questions and activities well. There is a pleasant atmosphere at the start of the day, when tea and toast are provided, with some students taking responsibility for these sessions. At breaks and lunchtime students engage positively with staff in football sessions and the atmosphere during the serving of lunch was relaxed and friendly.

Students say they feel safe in school, mentioning the improved arrangements for security of the site. Students feel that they have someone to talk to if they face personal difficulties. They believe that incidents of bullying are dealt with effectively and that there is less bullying, although this is not supported by the number of

incidents of bullying recorded. Students are also increasingly aware of how to stay healthy, although they accept that they do not always make healthy choices in their lifestyles. Students are increasingly contributing to the development of the school through the school council.

Attendance continues to be too low, but is improving. It is currently at 84% for this term, as compared to 78% for the same period in the previous year. The very low level of attendance recorded in the summer term has been tackled successfully. A member of staff has taken responsibility for this issue and is maintaining a close overview of patterns of attendance and liaising effectively with the educational welfare service. This is leading to specific action which is raising the attendance of individual students.

Quality of provision

Teaching is satisfactory. However, the proportion of good teaching has fallen and there is not enough to make a significant impact on raising standards. Teachers' planning of lessons is continuing to improve; there is a more consistent focus on what students are to learn and expectations are made clear to students at the start of each lesson. In some cases learning objectives are not stated with sufficient clarity to aid the assessment of students' achievement at the end of a lesson. Work is being increasingly varied to meet individual needs. It is not always easy for teachers to gain the full attention of students, but there are more instances where, through the perseverance of staff, interest and commitment increase rather than decrease over the course of a lesson. In most lessons, relationships between staff and students are positive. Occasionally, unsatisfactory teaching stems from misbehaviour that is not well managed. In these lessons staff are not treated with respect by students and inattention prevents effective learning.

The school is now fully aware of and meets the statutory requirements in delivering the subjects of the National Curriculum. The provision in design and technology is continuing to broaden and now includes the study of food and textiles, albeit at an early stage of development. Aspects of citizenship are taught in religious education and in personal, social and health education, as well as being developed in other subjects.. Teaching staff have taken advantage of professional development with the local authority and neighbouring schools to extend their knowledge of curriculum development in all areas, particularly in mathematics, science and information and communication technology. Schemes of work are satisfactory and increasingly recognise the range of needs of individual students.

The links with local colleges have been improved, enabling Key Stage 4 students to access a limited range of vocational provision, including engineering and agricultural studies. In addition, a small number of extended work placements have been arranged for individual students. There are developing links with schools to enrich provision in technology and sport and one Year 11 pupil is benefiting from attending English lessons at a local high school. There is an appropriate initiative, with other special schools, to commission additional courses from local providers. Students can gain accreditation for their achievement in core subjects and this is being extended

to foundation subjects. Despite these developments, progress in enhancing provision at Key Stage 4 has been too slow.

Enrichment activities within the curriculum have been improved to include the use of external speakers, visits and residential activities. This is enhancing the students' social and cultural development.

The school ensures the safety and well-being of students. There are regular risk assessments and the school is compliant with the latest Department for Education and Skills guidance on child protection.

There is a clear policy to support behaviour management, with a focus on rewards, which continue to be valued by students. The consistent use of the reward system by staff has improved, but some staff do not focus sufficiently on reminding students of how to gain points and instead stress the loss of points through misbehaviour. Students increasingly recognise their responsibility for their own actions and a calm detention at lunchtime illustrated students' willingness to readily accept the consequences of their behaviour. The impact of these strategies on behaviour and improving attitudes is clear. Although fixed-term exclusions remain too high, the proportion of students who have been excluded this term compared to last has fallen significantly.

Staff know the students well and there are established systems to provide individual support and guidance and to aid their reintegration into class after periods of difficulty. The overall contribution of learning support assistants is a strength. Students are well aware of their targets for improvement which are linked to their individual education plans. Targets are regularly reviewed at the beginning and end of the day and progress towards them is discussed sensibly. In some lessons students participate in assessing their progress, but this is not consistent. Guidance on academic improvement is less well developed and the use of short-term targets for improvement in literacy and numeracy is inconsistent.

Communication with parents has improved, as has the quality of students' interim reports. One parent spoke glowingly of the information provided to her by the school and the effectiveness of the care her son has received.

The links with external agencies have improved and the support from the Connexions adviser is valued, particularly by older students and parents. There are also developing links with the Youth Offending team, the educational psychology service and special educational needs officers to enhance provision.

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

- Improving the overall quality of the teaching in all subjects where currently these are unsatisfactory – satisfactory progress
- Ensure that the full National Curriculum is available and improve the quality of the curriculum in all subjects where it is unsatisfactory - satisfactory progress

- Establishing more effective systems to involve parents in the education of their children - satisfactory progress
- Improving the effectiveness of care policies and procedures, the use of restraint and the management of students' behaviour – good progress
- Putting in place suitable measures to tackle students' concerns about bullying – good progress

Leadership and management

The headteacher is providing strong leadership and has established a clear direction for improvement. There is a new extended senior management team which is beginning to share the responsibility for school improvement. This is a valuable development. However, it is too early for the impact of the team's work to be fully embedded and evaluated.

The school improvement plan has been revised to address earlier criticism and now addresses all of the key areas for improvement well. However, there is too great a focus in evaluations on the completion of tasks rather than their impact.

The systems for monitoring and evaluation are comprehensive and increasingly inform the planning for improvement. However, the records of lesson observations, although including areas for improvement, still do not consistently include a clear judgement on the overall quality of teaching. There is insufficient analysis of attainment data to demonstrate achievement. However, the recording system has been extended recently to include a 'traffic-light' system to highlight students' progress and underachievement. It is too early to comment on the impact of this development, but the initial targets within the system are unrealistic as they do not sufficiently recognise the range of ability within each year group. The information that is collected on attendance, use of reasonable force and exclusions is thoroughly analysed to establish patterns and inform practice.

The governing body is an increasingly effective group that is beginning to hold the school rigorously to account. It is well led and the chair knows the strengths of the school and areas for improvement well. The governors are fulfilling their statutory duties.

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

- Developing effective systems to monitor and evaluate the work of the school – satisfactory progress
- Ensure that key policies are up to date and parents are provided with information they should legally be given – good progress.

External support

The local authority continues to support the school well. The school adviser provides good ongoing support to the school and the monitoring role is effectively fulfilled by

the leader of the monitoring and intervention team. In addition, extra advisory support has been provided to support the development of teaching and this is to be continued. Additional funding has been acquired to increase the staffing of the school from next term, the music service is to be deployed to enhance the curriculum and a bid has been developed for additional funding for buildings, which would improve the availability of teaching spaces and allow greater flexibility.

Main Judgements

Progress since being subject to special measures - satisfactory

Progress since previous monitoring inspection - satisfactory

Priorities for further improvement

- The enhancement of the provision for the work-related and vocational curriculum at Key Stage 4 and the introduction of alternative accreditation should be accelerated.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the chair of governors and the Director of Education and Cultural Services for Lancashire.

Yours sincerely

Garry Jones
H M Inspector