

Nord Anglia Inspections
Anglia House
Carrs Road
Cheadle
Stockport SK8 2LA

T 0161 491 4191
F 0161 491 9677

Ofsted helpline
08456 404045



2 November 2006

Mrs A Kipling
Acting Headteacher
Berkeley Junior School
Marsden Drive
Scunthorpe
DN15 8AH

Dear Mrs Kipling

SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF BERKELEY JUNIOR SCHOOL

Introduction

Following my visit with David Byrne, Additional Inspector, to your school on 1 and 2 November 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 became subject to special measures in July 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

Lessons in all the classes and three assemblies were inspected. The pupils' conduct was observed at break and lunchtime. Discussions were held with senior staff, the chair of governors and a representative from the local authority. A range of documentation was examined.

Context

The substantive headteacher has left and a replacement is being recruited. A deputy headteacher and three teachers joined the school in September.

Achievement and standards

Overall, the school's results in the 2006 national tests for Year 6 pupils were similar to those for the past two years. There were improvements in the proportions of pupils reaching Level 4 in mathematics and science, but scores at the higher Level 5 fell, as did results in English.

Taken over a longer term the results demonstrate a failure to achieve consistency between the subjects. In mathematics, there has been a steady rise since 2003 in the proportion of pupils reaching Level 4. The 2006 result in English was the poorest in this period. Results in science have remained much the same.

There has been considerable action taken to improve the systems for assessing pupils' progress and gauging what needs to be done to tackle underperformance. A baseline has been established and regular checks are being made on the gains made by those pupils whose progress is of particular concern. The targets set in the school's revised action plan are for much higher standards than pupils have achieved to date. Nonetheless, as the school recognises, there is much ground to be made up if the targets for 2007 are to be achieved.

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

- Raise the pupils' achievement in English, mathematics and science – inadequate

Personal development and well-being

The pupils were well behaved, interested in work and keen to contribute. They readily followed the clear routines that have been established in classes and in assembly. For the most part they worked hard in class, though there were a few occasions when chattering affected the quantity and quality of what they produced. The good attendance this term, 95.7 per cent, reflects the pupils' enjoyment of school. They collaborate well, enjoy moments of humour without being silly and readily fulfil responsibilities. The pupils took pride in receiving rewards in the 'special mention' assembly and received warm applause from their schoolmates.

Quality of provision

There have been well-judged changes to the systems for assessing and tracking pupils' progress. This has involved training, new recording sheets and a review of the policy for marking pupils' work. There are regular meetings with teachers to check on the progress being made in each class, and the information from assessments is being used to determine the level of tasks in lessons. The next stage should be to include the pupils more fully in the process, so they know what level they have reached and what they need to accomplish to make the next step.

Action is also being taken to improve the quality of teaching. Pupils have been surveyed for their views on what constitutes a good lesson and this has been compared with that of the teachers. The deputy headteacher is leading discussions on the criteria for judging teaching and a programme of lesson observations has been established. The school's policy for teaching and learning is being rewritten. Importantly, the school's efforts are being reflected in the classroom. The quality of teaching was good in five lessons and satisfactory in seven. This represents continuing improvement. The lessons were well prepared, planned and organised. The learning objectives were clear and shared with the pupils. The work was matched to the pupils' needs and differentiated according to their various levels of achievement. The teachers' explanations were clear, often aided by the use of interactive whiteboards. The stronger lessons benefited from lively presentations by the teacher and regular checks to ensure that the pupils were building securely on what they already knew. Relative weaknesses related to: a loss of momentum, sometimes because pupils were allowed to chatter socially; a failure to involve enough pupils when the class was taught as whole, and thus gauge how well each pupil had listened and understood; and, most commonly, the under-use of classroom assistants.

Within the curriculum, the focus of work has rightly remained on the core subjects, for instance in further revisions to planning. Changes to the organisation of classes are allowing closer links to be drawn between subjects such as history and English. This merits further consideration, for instance in examining how the content of lessons in English skills and guided reading might contribute beyond its narrow focus.

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

- Improve the quality of teaching, learning, assessment and the curriculum – satisfactory

Leadership and management

The senior team is being re-established to provide the leadership to take the school forward. A new deputy headteacher began work in September and advertisements have been placed for a new headteacher. Meanwhile, the acting headteacher has made well-judged decisions about what can be achieved within interim arrangements. The school's original action plan had run its course. Its replacement is succinct, based on appropriate priorities, realistic in what can be achieved and has challenging targets. Actions such as ensuring that all policies are up to date should provide a valuable foundation for an incoming headteacher. The plan lacks a separate section on leadership and management, but these aspects are interwoven under other key headings such as improving teaching.

There is a strong sense of shared purpose in the school, with raising standards as the central aim. Senior staff are broadening the scope of their responsibilities, for instance over monitoring, and teamwork and morale have improved. The governors

are playing their part in checking that actions are taking place but they need to become more involved in strategic planning.

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

- Improve the leadership and management including governance – satisfactory

External support

The local authority has given a good deal of support to the school. The work of consultants and advice from the authority's officers has complemented the acting headteacher's drive for improvement. This is picking up momentum after a faltering start. It will be crucial for the local authority to manage the next stage – the transition in headship – so that gains are consolidated.

Main Judgements

Progress since being subject to special measures – satisfactory

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – satisfactory

The school may appoint newly qualified teachers.

Priorities for further improvement

The school has made good inroads into the additional priorities identified at the last monitoring inspection. What has been implemented as a result now needs to become a regular part of the school's practice.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the chair of governors and the Head of Education, Learning and Achievement, North Lincolnshire.

Yours sincerely

Steve Hardwick
H M Inspector