



14 September 2006

Mrs Irene Tuzio
Chair of Governors
Park View School
Twig Lane
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Dear Mrs Tuzio

SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF PARK VIEW PRIMARY SCHOOL

Introduction

Following my visit, with Ronald Bulman and Derek Aitken, Additional Inspectors, to your school on 12 and 13 September, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to confirm the inspection findings. The visit was the second monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures in November 2005.

Evidence

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

Context

Since the last monitoring visit in May 2006 staffing at the school has become more stable. The acting headteacher, who joined the school shortly before the inspection in 2005, has continued in post. Several permanent teaching staff have returned to the school following periods of illness. Two classes are taught by teachers on temporary, but long-term contracts.

Achievement and standards

In 2006, results in the national assessments at Key Stage 1 showed some modest improvement on 2005. Standards overall remain below average. Results in reading and writing rose but declined slightly in mathematics. The proportion of pupils achieving the higher Level 3 increased in mathematics and writing.

In the Key Stage 2 national tests too few pupils achieved the levels expected of them and results overall declined from the already low base in 2005. Standards remain below average, particularly in mathematics where they are well below average with just under a third of pupils achieving the expected level. Factors affecting these poor results included very unsettled behaviour within the year group, prolonged discontinuity in staffing and an above average absence rate during the exam week. For example, nearly one in five pupils of the outgoing Year 6 was absent for the national standardised test in science. Nonetheless, the proportion of pupils achieving the higher Level 5 in both English and mathematics rose.

In all lessons observed, pupils made satisfactory or better progress. The pace of learning is increasing and prior gaps in pupils' knowledge are beginning to be identified and tackled. Work is beginning to be more closely matched to the needs of pupils. Assessment data for the current Key Stage 2 year groups indicates that pupils are beginning to make better progress in their learning. The school recognises that the legacy of underachievement in terms of standards and pupils' achievement will take time to redress. Based on an analysis of this data the school has adopted a number of strategies, to address identified gaps in pupils' learning and to raise standards in English and mathematics. Last term, the Further Literacy Strategy was targeted at a number of Year 5 pupils. All pupils in Key Stage 2 are now taught literacy and numeracy in ability groups. Additional lessons in these subjects have been introduced for underachieving Year 6 pupils, although these do not always take place regularly. There are plans to extend these extra lessons to Year 5 pupils.

Standards achieved by Reception pupils at the end of the last academic year were below average. However, when their low starting point is taken into consideration they made good progress overall in their learning. Pupils made better progress in literacy than they did in mathematics. Particularly strong progress was made in personal and social development. The new pupils entering the Foundation Stage also have skills and abilities that are well below average for their age group. A new programme of pre-school home visits has usefully identified gaps in the knowledge of the youngest pupils. This information has been used to inform teachers' planning.

Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD) continued to make better progress than they did at the time of the last inspection. More effective use is now being made of the teaching assistants who are deployed to work alongside pupils with LDD. The needs of the more able are beginning to be better met through more carefully targeted work, although this is not the case in all classes.

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

- raise standards across the school especially in English and mathematics - satisfactory progress.

Personal development and well-being

Pupils' satisfactory spiritual and moral development is underpinned by their increasing adherence to the recently developed set of school values. Good social and cultural development, nurtured through a strong programme of extra-curricular activities, is becoming evident. Pupils enjoy coming to school and are beginning to thrive in an increasingly orderly and stimulating environment. Until recently, attendance remained persistently below average despite numerous strategies employed by the school and the LA's school attendance officer. However, there has been a marked upturn in attendance in the new term.

Pupils are gaining confidence in an improved atmosphere of trust and respect. They display consistently positive attitudes, good humour and courtesy. Many are actively involved in lessons and improvised games at playtimes. Pupils feel safe in school and largely free from bullying. They enjoy mature, constructive relations with adults. Boys and girls continue to enjoy opportunities for responsibility in the school, including school council membership and acting as buddies and play leaders. They gain pleasure and satisfaction from projects concerned with fundraising, healthy living, and improving school facilities.

Quality of provision

The quality of teaching and learning has improved since the last monitoring visit. All lessons observed were satisfactory or better and nearly two thirds were good. The promotion of whole-school strategies in creative learning and assessment methods is contributing to a greater consistency of approach, although there is still variation in the style and effectiveness of lessons on similar topics.

Well understood rewards and sanctions and the greater stability in staffing have led to improved behaviour in classes. This has allowed greater progress in learning to be made. Teachers are benefiting from the good external support and advice of the LA and its advanced skills teachers. They are becoming more independent in selecting and implementing successful teaching methods. The best practitioners engaged their classes in challenging activities and brisk discussions. Work was closely matched to pupils' prior attainment. In such lessons pupils were diligent and responsive to challenge, contributing substantially to their own learning and that of others. Teaching assistants and information and communication technology were used more effectively in lessons, as were concluding plenary sessions which summarised progress.

Where teaching was satisfactory, teachers did not always exploit the potential for progress offered by carefully considered setting and grouping. Pupils were more frequently set tasks suited to their ability, but some more able pupils lacked the opportunity to achieve at high levels. Support for less able pupils is generally satisfactory and skilled practitioners encouraged the most able to model responses for their classmates.

Since the previous monitoring visit the school has consolidated and extended the systems for assessing and tracking pupils' progress. These are becoming increasingly embedded at year and class levels. The new assessment coordinator is bringing greater coherence to the organisation of assessment procedures. Assessment resources have been centralised and a detailed and rigorous timetable for assessing core subjects introduced. An individual pupil tracking system is planned for future implementation. Improved accuracy of assessment information and greater confidence in handling and interpreting data have facilitated more effective curriculum planning. For example, recently collected data has been well used to organise the new setting arrangements and to identify underachievement. In particular, it has helped the school recognise that underachievement in mathematics is a whole school issue. The increasing regularity of formal assessment is building a greater awareness amongst teachers of its purposes and uses. It is also developing their accountability for pupils' progress and enabling them to plan more effectively for different groups of pupils. Learners are more aware of the National Curriculum levels they are working at but the developing system of setting targets for individuals has not yet made a full impact on their learning.

The improved behaviour of pupils underpins a positive climate where teachers and pupils can work more effectively together to help learners understand how to improve their work. The greater stability in staffing has allowed senior managers to deploy staff more effectively in supporting pupils' learning.

Support for the large numbers of pupils with LDD is improving, although a significant amount of work remains to be done in this area, for example in tackling weaknesses in numeracy. Individual education plans are generally good but hitherto their monitoring and review have been erratic. Processes for evaluating the quality and effectiveness of support for LDD pupils need further refinement.

A series of initiatives, such as the bazaar for Reception pupils, transition visits and a planned information meeting on Key Stage 2 testing, is helping the school build stronger links with parents and carers to support pupils' learning.

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 progress
- implementing systems to assess and track accurately pupils' progress, and using the information to direct future action – satisfactory progress
- ensuring that the support available to pupils helps them to understand how they can improve their work - satisfactory progress.

Leadership and management

The acting headteacher has continued to provide stable leadership and clear direction for the school. Morale has continued to improve. Under his strong leadership the sense of teamwork, shared purpose and good relationships amongst staff and pupils continue to develop. These in turn have contributed to the growing welcoming and positive ethos at the school which is now enabling learning to thrive. Nonetheless, there is a realistic view of how far the school has yet to travel in terms of standards and pupils' achievement.

Factors which in the past have adversely affected the performance of pupils have been tackled with determination. Staff absences have been further reduced and the ensuing stability has contributed to greater continuity in learning for pupils. The strong emphasis on improving pupils' behaviour has been maintained and behaviour management policies have been extended and applied with greater consistency. The school has worked hard to ensure that new and returning staff are aware of the developments in policy and procedures.

A member of the recently streamlined senior management team now has overall responsibility for assessment. While the responsibilities of senior managers have been broadly defined, full job descriptions clarifying their roles are not yet in place. A timetable for regular meetings of the senior management team has been drawn up. Time has been created for all subject managers to enable them to begin developing their roles. Subject managers for English and mathematics have been allocated additional time to monitor work in their subjects.

A number of development plans have usefully been brought together into a single school improvement plan, which gives a good overview of the future planned direction for the school and which is focused on the need to raise standards and pupils' achievement. The school has thoughtfully evaluated its weak performance in the recent Key Stage 2 exams. This good analysis was used to inform the decision to introduce the new setting arrangements.

Planning is monitored by the deputy headteacher. The school's arrangements for the rigorous and regular monitoring of teaching and learning remain modest, despite being identified as a priority for development at the time of the last monitoring visit. Whilst several newly qualified teachers were observed by senior managers last term, officers of the LA continue to lead the school's monitoring of teaching and learning.

Arrangements for the statutory performance management of teaching staff have been agreed but have not yet been enacted. Job descriptions for teaching staff clarifying current roles and responsibilities have yet to be developed.

The governing body is highly supportive of the headteacher and continues to develop well in its role as a critical friend to the school. A well-attended training day for governors has been held and a new school mission statement drawn up. Link governors who will shadow subjects in school have been appointed.

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

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

External support

The LA has continued to provide a high level of support for the school. It is funding the Intensifying Support Project for a second year and has continued to draw on its personnel and financial services to assist the school. The LA's education change partners have maintained close contact with the school and their advice is highly valued by the school. Prompt action has been taken to recruit a permanent headteacher. Officers from the LA meet regularly with the school leadership to monitor and discuss the school's progress.

Two local school collaboratives have continued to support the school well. For example, an officer from one has worked closely with the school to set up data analysis systems. A local pupil referral unit provides additional support for pupils with LDD.

Main Judgements

Progress since being subject to special measures – satisfactory.

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – satisfactory.

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

Priorities for further improvement

- Strengthen management and teaching by implementing a robust and rigorous internal system for the monitoring of teaching and learning.
- Maximise the effectiveness of support for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.
- Further clarify the roles and responsibilities of all teaching staff.
- Ensure continued consistency in applying the 'behaviour for learning' policy.

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

Yours sincerely

Michael McIlroy
H M Inspector