



14 December 2006

Mrs H Beeken
St Paul's Community Primary and Nursery School
Queens Road
Spalding
Lincolnshire
PE11 2QJ

Dear Mrs Beeken

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

Introduction

Following my visit to your school on 29 and 30 November 2006, 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 January 2006.

This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website.

Evidence

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

Context

Since the last visit in July 2006, two teachers have been recruited to the school. In addition, a teaching assistant has been appointed to work in the Reception class and two midday supervisory assistants have been employed following the decision to provide pupils with hot meals at lunchtime. A considerable amount of refurbishment during the summer has taken place which has significantly improved the learning environment. In addition, six interactive whiteboards have been installed to help support teaching and learning.

Achievement and standards

The results of the most recent National Curriculum tests in 2006, which have yet to be published formally, indicate that standards improved overall in reading and writing at the end of Year 2. However, no pupil achieved at the higher level in writing. Standards were lower in mathematics because fewer pupils achieved average or higher levels. Although in Year 6 English standards were similar to the outcomes achieved in 2005, proportionately fewer achieved at the higher level. Progress overall in English was broadly satisfactory. By the end of Key Stage 2, standards remained exceptionally low in mathematics and science because pupils made inadequate progress. This is because gaps in knowledge and understanding prevented some pupils from making the rates of progress necessary for them to reach or exceed their targets. For example, progress was better in reading than writing and mathematics by the end of Key Stage 1. Also, last year's Year 6 girls did not make expected progress in mathematics and science.

In response to this, a range of strategies have been implemented, designed to accelerate rates of pupil progress. The school assesses pupils' work in English and mathematics regularly. It uses this information to track progress against targets set in order to increase rates of progress so that pupils reach the levels expected nationally. Analysis of the school's assessment data shows this work is beginning to bring about improvement throughout the school. Accelerated progress is made by pupils when the initial assessment is accurate and both teachers and pupils have a good understanding of what needs to be done next. Good examples are found in pupils' work, although the school knows that there is much work to do.

In lessons observed during this visit, most pupils made at least satisfactory progress with an increasing number doing better than that. Although standards of English are below national expectations, there is some improvement in the number of pupils that write fluently and accurately. Increasing confidence in sentence construction and the acquisition of a wider range of vocabulary is helping to narrow the gap. Standards in mathematics are below national expectations because many pupils are not confident in their number work and lack basic numeracy skills. They do not have the rapid recall of number bonds and tables skills necessary to improve their rate of work and progress.

Personal development and well-being

Most pupils behave well and treat each other with respect. Relationships between pupils and adults are good. Most pupils show good attitudes to their work and in the main they concentrate well. Occasionally, their attention wanders when the pace of the lesson slows. Consistent use of the behaviour policy by all staff is effective in giving recognition to those pupils who behave well while focusing others on the choices they should make. Pupils say they enjoy school and that there is always an adult they can confide in when they have concerns. They are positive about others' behaviour and say that any misbehaviour is dealt with by adults promptly and fairly. Pupils are well cared for at break times and they continue to respond well to the range of activities provided. For example, there are plentiful opportunities for pupils to be energetic, sit quietly or play thoughtful games such as draughts. Most pupils come back into school refreshed and ready for their next lessons. The recent introduction of a hot school meal is enjoyed by an increasing number of pupils, although there are some teething problems with the range and quality. The number of pupils taking up their entitlement to a free school meal has increased.

There are no pupil exclusions. The school continues to integrate successfully an increasing number of pupils from a range of different Eastern European countries and effectively supports their learning. For example, the school has been proactive in appointing a dedicated coordinator for pupils who speak English as an additional language (EAL). In addition, a Polish teacher works with a group of pupils, and students from the local secondary school help to support learning for a small number of identified pupils. Attendance rates have improved steadily and are now in line with the national average.

Quality of provision

The teaching for learning policy is being implemented appropriately, leading to improvements in the quality of teaching and learning since the last inspection. Almost one half of lessons seen were good and there were no inadequate lessons. Where good teaching was seen, lessons were clearly planned to meet the needs of all pupils. In these lessons, tasks were carefully matched to attainment, building on pupils' knowledge and understanding. Teachers gave clear explanations and challenged their pupils' learning with the result that they made good progress. Good questioning by teachers encouraged pupils to participate and to check their progress. Pace was judged accurately, consolidating learning when necessary and moving pupils on promptly whenever possible. Plenary sessions were used well to draw together learning at appropriate times. Effective use of the recently installed

interactive whiteboards improved the involvement and attention of pupils. In those lessons where teaching was satisfactory, the pace of lessons slowed due over-lengthy introductions or discussion. When work did not encourage pupils to think or participate, some lost interest and became quietly disinterested. Occasionally, teachers were not always sufficiently aware of the opportunities that could have challenged or extended some pupils' thinking.

The curriculum is satisfactory and meets statutory requirements. A great deal of time is rightly dedicated to literacy and numeracy. As a result, opportunities to enrich the curriculum with visits and visitors have reduced in recent times. There is a need to provide increased opportunities for pupils to use their writing and mathematics skills across the curriculum. This will require consideration as the school seeks to make learning more thought provoking and interesting by linking work between subjects. A good example was seen in a Year 2 science lesson where pupils applied their understanding of writing instructions learned in English to making an electrical circuit. A good start has been made to improve pupils' presentation. The quality in pupils' books is better, reflecting higher teacher expectations and increased pace and rigour in learning. Pupils are taking an increased pride in their work. However, there is still evidence of untidy presentation in some books. For example, some writing is incorrectly formed, a number of pupils who were joining are reverting back to print and some pupils are crossing out untidily when they make mistakes.

Judgement

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 – satisfactory progress

Systems for assessing pupils' work across the school are now regular and becoming well established. The introduction of specific targets in literacy and numeracy throughout the school has made a good contribution to focusing pupils' learning and evaluating their progress. The targets address different levels of attainment and are beginning to provide suitable challenge or support. The quality of marking has improved but is better in literacy than in mathematics. Where it is good, it refers to the purpose of the lesson, indicates what pupils need to do next to improve and time is given for them to respond. However, although clear targets are identified in most books, pupils often move onto another activity before they have had the opportunity to respond appropriately. A good impact is made when marking by the

teaching assistant and other adults is consistent with that of the teacher. The use of tracking and target setting is developing well and is increasingly becoming a key part of practice. The school has now established a bank of data to show the progress the pupils are making over time and to identify where it has been rapid or too slow. This has made pinpointing individuals for support more effective. Good support is provided for those who have learning difficulties and disabilities and special educational needs. Pupils, parents, teachers and teaching assistants, supported by the special educational needs coordinator, are appropriately involved in setting targets within individual education plans (IEPs). The school continues to take good physical and emotional care of the pupils and the academic support is now adequate. There are satisfactory arrangements for taking their views into account through the school council.

Judgement

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 – satisfactory progress

Leadership and management

The school continues to concentrate on bringing about the necessary improvements and has been successful in a number of areas. The headteacher is providing increasingly effective leadership. She has introduced greater accountability for staff and more rigorous monitoring of performance and outcomes. The development of the senior management team is increasingly effective in agreeing policy and improving the consistency of practice. The school's analysis of test and assessment information is accurate and identifies appropriate pupils for additional assistance and also areas to be improved. The leaders of core subjects and special educational needs increasingly identify relevant strategies for improvement and conduct more regular monitoring of progress. Staff have worked hard to make the necessary improvements. Their morale remains high and all are committed to improving the pupils' progress. The headteacher's reports to the governors and the school's evaluation of its performance contain effective analysis of test results and assessment data. Records of observations of lessons are accurate and provide good advice to teachers on increasing the rate of pupils' progress and improving the quality of learning.

The work of the governing body is satisfactory and improving. Governors are increasing their challenge and are beginning to make regular visits to the school. The detail provided in the headteacher's reports, minutes of meetings and evidence gathered themselves enable the governors hold the school to account more effectively.

Judgement

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 coordinators 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 local authority continues to provide effective targeted support for the headteacher and the school. School improvement advisers have made good contributions to the progress the school has made. Consultants give appropriate advice and guidance to staff. Good support has been provided for the governing body.

Main Judgements

Progress since being subject to special measures – satisfactory

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – satisfactory

Newly qualified teachers may not be appointed.

Priorities for further improvement

- Improve confidence in mathematics by increasing opportunities for pupils to solve problems and use and apply mathematics in a range of formal and informal settings.
- Provide increased opportunities for pupils to improve their literacy skills further, particularly those of extended writing, by linking them to other areas of the curriculum.
- Continue to monitor and moderate the impact of assessment and use the outcomes to further increase rates of pupil progress.
- Ensure all staff consistently apply the recently introduced presentation, marking and teaching for learning policies.

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

Yours sincerely

Paul Weston
Her Majesty's Inspector