



6 February 2007

Mr Laurence Keel
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Dear Mr Keel

SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF THE KILBURN PARK SCHOOL

Introduction

Following my visit with Jo Curd, Additional Inspector, to your school on 30 and 31 January 2007, 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 March 2006.

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 all the members of the senior leadership team, a governor, and a representative from the local authority (LA). They spoke informally with other staff and pupils during the course of their work.

Context

The governing body was unable to appoint a suitable candidate for the headship. The seconded headteacher has resigned his post with the LA and taken the acting headship role until July. Two class teachers have been appointed to Year 5, one on a temporary basis for the remainder of the year and one permanent. They replace the acting deputy headteacher who has

been removed from class responsibilities to increase the time available to develop her leadership role and to support the management of the school, and a teacher deployed to provide support for pupils with learning difficulties. The latter is a very recent change that is yet to begin in earnest. The building work is complete. Pupils in Year 3 have moved to their new classrooms and the new suite of computers is operational. Both playgrounds are in use again.

Achievement and standards

Standards in reading, writing and mathematics at the top of the school are low. They are closer to expected levels in Years 3 and 4. Pupils' achievement remains inadequate as a result of the legacy of weaknesses in teaching in the past and some remaining inconsistencies. Evidence from lessons and from pupils' work shows patchy progress. Pupils are beginning to make progress where teaching is secure and where there is a clear focus, for example in writing. The 'Big Writing' initiative is giving pupils increased opportunities to write at length. Pupils say they enjoy the atmosphere in class and the rewards of fruit. Where teachers' marking is good, pupils are given developmental pointers to help further improvement. This is very new and the approach is not yet consistent across classes. However, it is becoming a feature of the week and already making an impact on pupils' motivation to write, especially where drama is used as a stimulus. Displays of writing, and helpful resources in each class which include word walls are contributing to pupils' improving vocabulary. Test results show that some pupils are making progress in reading but, again, this is inconsistent. Progress in mathematics is secure where teaching is good and tasks are matched to pupils' abilities. Some effective use of paired and group work helps pupils to clarify their mathematical understanding. There are still instances where the pace of lessons is inhibited by pupils' poor basic mathematical knowledge.

Personal development and well-being

Pupils' attitudes to school and their behaviour continue to improve so that there is a positive ethos in the school. A small number of pupils find it difficult to conform to expectations but the vast majority behave well and are eager to learn. Exclusions have reduced dramatically and there are fewer disruptions to learning. Generally, lessons are calm and purposeful. Pupils are engaged and, at times, excited by learning and eager to respond to teachers. So, where teaching is good, the pace of learning is good because pupils respond quickly. They are confident, friendly, polite to visitors and generally

pleasant to each other. Tensions between pupils still occur but they are learning to cope with these and are supported effectively by teaching assistants when necessary. As a result, pupils feel safe and enjoy school. They are motivated by trips to interesting places and opportunities to participate in the local football league. The high level of participation in clubs, before, during, and after school, is testament to their positive attitudes.

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

- improve behaviour in lessons, particularly amongst older pupils – good progress

Quality of provision

Inconsistencies and weaknesses remain in the teaching. It is not yet securely satisfactory but senior staff know where the weaknesses are and, with the help of LA consultants, give appropriate support and feedback on how to improve. Some of the issues identified previously remain, but are not so widespread. At this visit, there was more good teaching and less that was inadequate. There are signs that teaching is improving and, importantly, that staff have a commitment to improving their practice.

Most lessons have a positive atmosphere supported by consistent behaviour management and expectations with just the occasional negative nagging, noted at the last visit. This improvement is encouraging pupils' engagement and positive attitudes to learning. Most teachers use the interactive whiteboard efficiently to demonstrate ideas and to capture pupils' interest. The learning environment is much improved. Displays of pupils' work, activities and events celebrate their achievement and boost their self-esteem. The good focus on vocabulary and language structures as part of the 'Big Writing' initiative is beginning to support pupils' written work. Lesson plans are often detailed, but are not always clear about how tasks will be adapted for pupils' abilities. Even where tasks are modified, there is insufficient difference to provide a close match to pupils' needs. Plans rarely identify any specific support strategies for pupils who speak English as an additional language. In practice, paired talk and the focus on vocabulary are supportive for these pupils but, at times, teachers do not use subject specific terminology accurately enough. Teachers' knowledge is insecure in some subjects. The teaching of science, for example, lacks rigour and is not providing a consistently structured approach to developing pupils' scientific

skills. The variable contribution of teaching assistants remains an issue. Some are passive at the start of lessons though many provide good support for learning following clear direction from the teacher. A good system for enabling the assistant to note how well pupils have achieved the lesson's objective operates in a Year 5 class. This could usefully be shared across the school.

All pupils have a target for writing and for mathematics. In most classes, these are stuck to the tables so that pupils know what they are, although not all understand what they mean. In the main, targets are appropriate although some are too broad and some are generic. In a few classes, targets are very specific, individual in the true sense of the word, and based on the teacher's good knowledge of each pupil's capabilities. This inconsistency stems from the absence of clear systems for assessing what pupils know and can do, and for identifying what they need to learn next. Marking, as a form of assessing pupils' knowledge and understanding is used inconsistently to identify what they need to do to improve.

The inclusion manager has established thorough systems for identifying and supporting the needs of pupils with learning. Intervention programmes of support have begun and some pupils are making rapid progress, for example, in response to the daily sessions in phonics. Few pupils who speak English as an additional language are at the early stages of language acquisition. Most are bilingual but require support to extend their understanding and use of written language. There is more to do to ensure that these pupils receive appropriate work and support in lessons. The school has well-established links with external agencies to ensure that the support for the social and emotional needs of the most vulnerable and challenging pupils is good.

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

- ensure that all pupils receive consistently good teaching based on careful planning, so that they achieve as well as they can throughout the school – satisfactory progress

Leadership and management

The senior leadership team has done much to set in place systems and structures which will help the school to move forward. Each team member now has a clear job description and areas of responsibility. The team is

beginning to work together through regular meetings. Supported effectively by the LA, individual responsibilities within the team are also developing, albeit at different rates. The role of the deputy headteacher is developing well with a sharp focus on raising standards in English. Phase leaders are developing satisfactorily. The headteacher is currently team teaching lessons in information and communication technology (ICT) as a means of developing staff skills but the teaching role of the deputy is not yet established. These teaching roles will need to be kept under review. Some fine-tuning is required to balance the time given to supporting staff through team teaching with the need to increase the frequency of monitoring of lessons and of pupils' work and to ensure sufficient rigour in following up identified weaknesses.

Weaknesses in the school improvement plan have been tackled effectively. The plan now has appropriate success criteria and identifies the responsibilities for implementing and monitoring actions. There is still a large agenda and so the required focus on improving teaching and learning to raise standards, though implicit, is not given sufficient weight. Staff have responded well to specific guidance on how to teach writing which is resulting in some early signs of improvement in pupils' progress. The leadership team has devised useful written guidance on what constitutes good teaching and learning but has not yet shared this with the whole staff. Senior staff have used test data to identify groups of pupils who need support and intervention programmes, to target pupils for learning centre activities, and to identify gaps in their knowledge. However, this information is not used consistently by teachers to meet pupils' learning needs in lessons.

Governors are becoming less reliant on the high level of support provided by the LA and headteacher. They are beginning to ask questions and address issues for themselves but recognise that as a body they are not yet sharp enough in their role as a critical friend to the school. Recently, members have become more cohesive and forward looking.

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

- provide strong leadership and management focused on improving learning – satisfactory progress

External support

The LA continues to give a good level of support that is now beginning to have some impact. For example, support from consultants for developing the leadership roles of phase and subject leaders and support for improving teaching are beginning to bear fruit. Governor support continues, especially for financial management. LA consultants continue to monitor the quality of teaching, providing helpful feedback for staff and useful management information for the headteacher. The strategy group meets termly to check on the effectiveness of support and the progress the school is making.

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

- Inject further rigour into evaluating and using the findings from monitoring to ensure that actions are followed through.
- Improve lesson planning to ensure that teachers consistently use assessment information, including that from the marking of pupils' work, to provide tasks that better match pupils' learning needs.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the chair of governors and the Director of School Improvement Services for Brent.

Yours sincerely

Jane Wotherspoon
H M Inspector