



11 January 2007

Mr J Shaw
Headteacher
Park View School
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Dear Mr Shaw

SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF PARK VIEW PRIMARY SCHOOL

Introduction

Following my visit with Ian Thompson and Judith Tolley, Additional Inspectors, to your school on 9 and 10 January 2007, 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 November 2005.

This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website.

Evidence

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

Context

Since the last monitoring visit in September 2006 a permanent headteacher has been appointed. Staffing has remained stable at the school. Two classes continue to be taught by teachers on temporary long-term contracts.

Achievement and standards

The standards achieved by pupils in the most recent national assessments at the end of Key Stage 2 in 2006 were very low, particularly in mathematics. These were reported on in detail in the last monitoring letter. Whilst the standards achieved by current pupils remain low overall, they are beginning to rise. In nearly all lessons observed, pupils made satisfactory progress in their learning and some made good progress. However, the legacy of underachievement means that too many pupils are not yet working at the levels expected for their age group. The school remains realistic about the scale of the task it faces to raise standards to a satisfactory level and has begun to tackle this determinedly.

The performance of pupils has been carefully tracked and this information has been well used to identify underachievement. Subsequently, the school has targeted pupils who are underperforming through the use of an increasing number of intervention strategies. For example, effective additional classes have been held for groups of Year 6 pupils who have fallen behind in English and mathematics. The school's assessment information, based on recent internal testing, suggests that standards for Year 6 pupils are rising and will lead to an improvement on the very low English and mathematics results achieved in 2006. However, standards in mathematics continue to lag behind those in English. Some additional lessons for Year 6 pupils have also taken place in science but the school has not yet fully assessed how well its pupils are achieving in this subject.

Other year groups have also received additional help to raise standards. The Further Literacy Strategy and the Early Literacy Strategy have been used to raise attainment for groups of pupils in Year 5 and Year 1. A mathematics recovery strategy has raised attainment for some pupils in Key Stage 1. In combination with improvements in behaviour and attendance, these strategies are beginning to reverse the downward trend in achievement.

Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are making satisfactory progress and some are now making good progress. This is an improvement on the position observed during the last monitoring visit. The more accurate use of performance data, more frequent reviews of how pupils are doing and closer liaison between staff have contributed to this.

Progress on the areas 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' attitudes and behaviour are good in response to the school's continued development of its 'behaviour for learning' policy and its more consistent application. The learning atmosphere in the school has continued to improve. Pupils, including the youngest, are showing a greater understanding of the school's core values. They are more settled and exclusions have been greatly reduced. Learners are developing responsible attitudes to working independently. The majority of pupils contribute willingly to lessons and many show that they are eager to learn. Pupils say that they enjoy coming to school and this is reflected in a marked improvement in attendance, which is now broadly average. Pupils feel safe in school and are confident that they have someone to turn to if they are in difficulty. They believe they have a voice in the school that will be heard and that they can make a positive contribution to the school community, for example, through the school council.

Quality of provision

The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall: in over a third of lessons observed it was good. Where teaching is good, work is challenging and well matched to learners' needs. Pupils are clear about what they have to do and expectations of what they can achieve are high. Information and communication technology, such as interactive whiteboards, is well used by teachers. Additional adults are generally well used, particularly in supporting less able pupils. All staff have worked hard to ensure that the 'behaviour for learning' policy is consistently applied. This has had a major impact on teaching and learning. Behaviour is good in classrooms and little time is lost managing poor conduct. The attitudes of pupils to learning are also much more positive. The school has sensibly taken advantage of improvements in behaviour to launch initiatives that have a beneficial impact on learning. An example of this is the recent drive to encourage pupils to listen more attentively.

Although teaching is satisfactory overall, there are nonetheless some weaknesses. Introductions to lessons are often too lengthy and pupils do not always have enough opportunities, or time, to apply what they have learnt independently. In some cases, pupils become restless when they are asked to sit and listen for too long. Concluding plenary sessions are not always well used and some opportunities for assessing how well pupils have progressed are missed. The quality of planning is variable and assessment information is not used consistently to match work to the needs of all pupils. Not all the more able pupils are sufficiently challenged. Marking is supportive but does not yet give many pupils clear enough guidance about how to improve. The school has timely plans to address this. The school has recently introduced its own system of monitoring teaching and learning and is beginning to identify and remedy weaknesses in teaching.

The school continues to improve its systems for providing guidance and support for pupils. For example, the learning mentor and other designated staff provide good support for pupils identified at risk of exclusion. The school has worked hard to develop a comprehensive system for assessing and tracking pupils' performance. This enables areas of underachievement to be identified promptly and remedial action can be taken. The system is in the early stages of its implementation and it is too early to judge its full impact on learning. Pupils have recently received targets for improvement in literacy and numeracy and these have been shared with parents. However, the way in which targets for mathematics are worded is too complex. Consequently, pupils are unable to say what it is that they should be able to do or what they need to do to improve their work.

The system for assessing the needs of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is now well established. Teaching assistants are fully involved in tracking and recording pupils' performance. Careful records of progress are kept so that all staff are informed of pupils' changing needs and able to plan for them. Parents and pupils are involved in regular reviews of progress towards the targets included in individual education plans. The organization of support provided for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities was identified as an area for improvement following the last monitoring visit. The school has acted promptly to remedy this issue. Teaching assistants are fully involved in lesson planning and understand better how they can contribute to pupils' progress.

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 – good progress
- ensuring that the support available to pupils helps them to understand how they can improve their work - satisfactory progress

Leadership and management

The appointment of the acting headteacher to the post of permanent headteacher has contributed to the continued stability in leadership and management of the school. He is strongly supported by the governing body. Under his good and purposeful leadership, morale and the sense of teamwork have continued to improve and the school is rapidly developing a strong shared sense of purpose. A positive learning ethos has continued to develop. Routines are more firmly embedded. An example of this is the more

consistent application of the 'behaviour for learning' policy. Stability in staffing has been maintained and careful thought is given to how staff are deployed so that improvements in standards are sustained.

The school has resolutely and successfully tackled the areas for improvement identified during the previous monitoring inspection. A good start has been made in developing the school's own internal systems for checking the effectiveness of its work. The headteacher has led the school's monitoring programme, which is identifying strengths and weaknesses in teaching and learning. Another senior manager regularly monitors planning. Following training and guidance provided by the LA, several key subject managers have begun to observe lessons and check pupils' work.

The management of the school has been strengthened. The roles of members of the senior management team have been more precisely defined and the team now meets regularly. It is appropriately focused on improving the achievement of pupils. Four staff groups have been set up under the leadership of senior managers to develop other key aspects of school life, such as inclusion and creativity. Consequently, the senior management team is now more effective and providing greater strategic direction for the school. Job descriptions have been put in place for all teaching staff. Teachers are clear about their own roles as subject managers and about the roles of others. Subject managers have produced action plans for their subjects. Arrangements for the statutory performance management of teachers have been put in place. The school development plan is aptly focused on raising the attainment of pupils and is regularly evaluated, although there are no key milestones against which the improvement in standards can be judged.

The school continues to develop good relations with parents and to involve them more in their children's learning. For example, several information evenings have been held to show parents how pupils' learning and progress are assessed and to advise them on how they can help their children improve. Time was taken at the recent set of parents' evenings to explain the system of pupils' targets which has recently been enacted.

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

- establishing a strong, stable and positive team providing coherent leadership and management - good progress

External support

The LA provides good support for the school. It has continued to fund the Intensifying Support Programme. A number of the LA's consultants work regularly with the school and provide training. LA resources such as financial and personnel advice are drawn on by the school. Regular meetings are held

between LA officers and the school to monitor the school's progress. There are supportive links with two local learning collaboratives and other local schools.

Main Judgements

Progress since being subject to special measures – satisfactory

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – good

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

Priorities for further improvement

- Further develop the new monitoring system and share existing good practice to improve the proportion of good teaching.
- Make better use of assessment data to ensure that work is matched to the needs of all pupils, including the more able.
- Develop marking to give pupils more guidance on how to improve their work.

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

Yours sincerely

Michael McIlroy
H M Inspector