



28 March 2007

Mrs H Beeken  
St Paul's Community Primary and Nursery School  
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Dear Mrs Beeken

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

### Introduction

Following my visit to your school with Pat Cox, Additional Inspector, and Anne Orton HMI on 20-21 March 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 January 2006.

This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website.

### Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the deputy-headteacher, senior management team (SMT), the co-ordinators for English, mathematics and assessment, other school staff, groups of pupils, the chair accompanied by the vice-chair of governors and a representative of the local authority (LA). Using this evidence, the inspectors made the following observations to the headteacher, deputy-headteacher, chair and vice-chair of governors, SMT and representative of the LA.

### Context

Since the last visit in November 2006, there have been no staffing changes. The Year 3 teacher has had a lengthy period of absence which was appropriately managed by the school in an effort to minimise disruption to learning by the class. The school is in discussion with Sure Start about the possible location of a Children's Centre on the school site.

## Achievement and standards

The introduction of a detailed system to assess the attainment of pupils throughout Years 1 to 6 each term and to track their progress is increasingly being used by the SMT and staff. In all year groups, teachers are more aware of which pupils are underperforming and some are using this information to help inform their planning and preparation. Analysis of resulting data indicates signs of improving progress for many pupils, but this is not consistent throughout the school. The data shows that the majority of pupils in Years 1, 2, 4 and 6 are generally making satisfactory progress in reading, writing and mathematics. However, in Years 3 and 5, progress has been slower with too many pupils making little or no progress. In these year groups, at least a quarter of pupils in writing and up to a half in reading and mathematics are identified as making unsatisfactory progress. In Year 4, a quarter of pupils have made inadequate progress in reading, writing and mathematics. In addition, the headteacher and assessment co-ordinator have indicated that the end of Key Stage 2 targets, based on Year 2 outcomes, may not be achieved in mathematics. This is due in part to the legacy of under achievement of this group of pupils, and the limited impact of the recently implemented strategies to accelerate rates of pupil progress. A wide range of intervention programmes have been implemented to increase further rates of progress. However, it is unclear what impact these strategies are having on raising standards and increasing rates of pupil progress.

Observations during this visit showed a somewhat different picture. In lessons observed, standards in mathematics are below average in Years 2, 3 and 4. They are broadly average in Years 5 and 6. In writing, standards are below average in Year 1 but broadly average in Years 5 and 6. Scrutiny of work shows standards overall are below average in Year 2, with pupils making adequate progress. In Year 3, standards are well below average and progress is inadequate. Presentation is untidy and marking does not provide sufficient guidance for pupils about what they need to do next to improve. There is some improvement in Year 4. Standards are below average with most making satisfactory progress. There remain inconsistencies in presentation and marking in this class. In Years 5 and 6 standards are broadly average. There is a wide range of written and mathematical work in books. There is some improvement in pupils' writing fluency, accuracy and presentation. Increasingly, pupils are taking a pride in their work.

Accelerated progress is made by pupils when the initial assessment is accurate, learning is more challenging and both teachers and pupils have a good understanding of what needs to be done next. As on the last visit, gaps in pupils' knowledge and understanding prevents them from making progress at the rate necessary for them to reach their targets and achieve the objectives for the lesson. The school knows that there is much work to do to plug the gaps and increase rates of progress.

## Personal development and well-being

During the visit, pupil's behaviour in lessons and around school was good. Most pupils shared resources, co-operated well and showed good attitudes to their work. Relationships between adults and pupils were good. Teaching assistants provide valuable support and they are well respected by pupils. Praise and encouragement were used effectively to help pupils feel confident to have a go. However, in the minority of lessons where tasks were less challenging, some lost concentration, became passive and achieved less than they should. Pupils from a range of different Eastern European countries continue to be supported effectively. The English as an Additional Language (EAL) co-ordinator, a Polish teacher and group of pupils and students from the local secondary school successfully aid the learning of a number of identified pupils. These pupils have made good gains in their knowledge of spoken and written English since September 2006.

## Quality of provision

Teaching is satisfactory overall but is not yet good enough to eradicate the legacy of underachievement. Relationships are good in classrooms and discipline is secure and therefore most lessons are uninterrupted by distracting behaviour. Although no good teaching was observed during this visit, a number of strengths were evident in otherwise satisfactory lessons. Teachers refer to the learning objectives of the lesson and sometimes remind pupils what they are to achieve. The older pupils have success criteria and checklists they use to assess their own progress. On occasion, the pupils are involved in identifying what the criteria should be; these strategies all add to their understanding of how well they have made progress. There are examples of good questioning that explores pupils' understanding and encourages them to think. In some classes, expectations are higher than they were and therefore the pace has occasionally increased and work is sometimes more challenging.

However, improvements are not consistent through the school. Too little is demanded of many pupils, particularly the more able. Work is often set at an appropriate level for the general standard of the class. Nonetheless, that set for the higher ability is often too little different in quality from the average pupils. They are rarely moved on rapidly enough once it is apparent that they have grasped the concept. Pace remains a shortcoming in many lessons. Some parts of the lesson are too lengthy and pupils are not always required to concentrate sufficiently on their work or complete their tasks rapidly enough. While some strategies are employed to enable the pupils to consider their ideas before answering, such as paired discussion, there is some lack of understanding about how these can be used to best effect. Little use was seen of methods that might speed up lessons, such as pupils using whiteboards or number fans to demonstrate their understanding.

Teaching assistants mostly give sound support to the groups they are assigned to. There are times when the less able pupils only complete the work because that support is there, and it is not always apparent that they have understood. In addition, the teaching assistant occasionally does not have the subject knowledge to teach the concept correctly. Occasionally, the teacher pays too much attention to the boys and the girls do not have sufficient opportunity to be involved in, and contribute to, the lesson. Marking is improving and, where used well, shows pupils what they have done well, how closely they have met the learning objectives and what they need to do to improve. Nevertheless, this is again inconsistent and there are still examples of work that is unmarked, particularly in subjects other than English and mathematics. In some instances, there is little evidence of an impact of the teacher's marking, for example on pupils' neatness or completion of work. The use of layered targets is supporting pupils in knowing what the next step in their learning will be and many pupils know their targets. However, they are sometimes displayed without being referred to or the pupils being aware of them.

The curriculum is barely satisfactory. The school enlivens the curriculum with visits, and particularly a residential visit. However, little use of information and communication technology (ICT) was evident during the visit. The organisation of the curriculum does not support the school's priorities well enough. There is an imbalance in timetables and the time in the day is not used as efficiently as it could be. For example, the times of the morning have been altered to accommodate many of the intervention strategies without sufficient consideration of the impact on the rest of the curriculum. Some pupils who are withdrawn for individual or group work in English or mathematics interventions miss lessons in other subjects. In addition, 'privilege time' appears to have a greater time allocation in most classes than many foundation subjects.

The school is rightly concentrating on raising standards in English and mathematics. However so much time is allocated to these, and particularly to English, that the time for other subjects is squeezed. While teachers are aware that standards in writing need to be raised, too little emphasis is given in many classes to pupils writing for themselves. There are few opportunities to write at any length, even in English lessons. It is rare for pupils to complete much of their own written work in other subjects and there is some over-use of worksheets. Few opportunities were given to pupils to extend their skills in listening and particularly in speaking. In science, there is little written work in pupils' books, and few instances of them making decisions about scientific enquiry or setting out their own findings. While pupils complete much number work, there is less emphasis on other aspects of mathematics, and particularly on using and applying mathematical knowledge and understanding.

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– inadequate progress

The school is continuing to develop its assessment procedures and the use it makes of this data. The tracking system is useful in showing progress but there is considerable uncertainty about the reliability of much of the assessments that have been made, particularly in the Foundation Stage. Scrutiny of pupils' books demonstrates that the data the school holds on progress in each year group is not necessarily accurate and therefore it is unable to demonstrate how well different cohorts are making progress. Teachers have a general awareness of the levels at which their pupils are working but this understanding is not refined enough to be able to identify the key shortcomings in pupils' knowledge and skills. Consequently, while targets are often appropriate, the tasks pupils are set do not always help them to eliminate these weaknesses.

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 headteacher and her deputy are continuing to move the school forward. They are increasingly being supported by the middle managers who are beginning to develop their involvement and participation. The work of the governing body is satisfactory and continues to progress appropriately. Governors are committed to the work of the school. They are increasing their challenge and some are making regular visits to the school. All governors are now linked to a subject area and some are visiting the school to conduct a 'learning walk' and meet with curriculum co-ordinators. This is increasing their understanding of standards in their allocated area. The chair also regularly attends SMT meetings. Activities such as these, along with detail provided in the headteachers reports and minutes of meetings enables the governors hold the school more to account. The co-ordinators for English and mathematics are providing increasingly effective leadership for their subjects. With appropriate support and professional advice from the LA, they are leading a range of initiatives to improve pupils' progress. For example, the literacy subject leader has recently increased her confidence in levelling writing throughout the school.

Leaders and managers of the school are continuing to focus on the priority of improving teaching and raising standards. Comprehensive support has been provided and a wide range of strategies have been implemented throughout the school. However, some have been introduced without always considering their appropriateness, relevance or whether they would make a significant difference. Too many initiatives have been attempted. Consequently, some have been partially implemented without full staff understanding and have not been sufficiently effective in bringing about improvements. An example of this is where some teachers are using Assessment for Learning (AFL) strategies indiscriminately, not because they are appropriate, but because they believe they are expected. In addition, individual staff are not always held to account by the SMT when they have failed to implement school policy to the agreed standard. This is leading to inconsistency of approach and does not allow staff to build on firm foundations.

A range of monitoring activities such as lesson observations, scrutiny of pupils' work and regular assessments have been undertaken by senior leaders and governors. In some instances, like the 'Review of Learning', these have increased their understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and have led to clear action. In others, the evaluation of outcomes is wrongly focused or insufficient. Therefore, actions have failed to bring about the necessary improvements in learning. During recent internal classroom observations insufficient focus was given to pupils' learning or progress made in lessons and over time. Consequently, staff are failing to realise that good teaching can only happen when all pupils make gains in their learning. Although the progress made by many pupils is improving, there are still far too many pupils who are not making as much progress as they could.

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 co-ordinators 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 school has continued to benefit from a wide range of support from the LA. Consultants and advisers have been beneficial in developing the skills of senior leaders as well as providing targeted support for individual teachers. Lessons have been jointly monitored and suitable guidance has been given. Appropriate support has been provided for the governing body.

## Main Judgements

Progress since being subject to special measures – satisfactory

Progress since the previous monitoring inspection – satisfactory

Newly qualified teachers may not be appointed.

## Priorities for further improvement

- Increase rates of pupil progress throughout the school with the support of the LA by critically evaluating the range of strategies recently implemented, then prioritising and focusing on those which will have the greatest impact.
- Increase staff engagement and involvement so that they understand that that success is dependent upon consistent implementation of agreed policies by them all.
- Ensure that everyone in the school takes responsibility for moving it forward as rapidly as possible.
- Ensure the curriculum meets statutory requirements, particularly for ICT.

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