



8 March 2007

Mr P Clayton
Headteacher
Langley Mill Junior School
Bailey Brook Crescent
Langley Mill
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Dear Mr Clayton

SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF LANGLEY MILL JUNIOR SCHOOL

Introduction

Following my visit with Brian Downes and Sue Hall, Additional Inspectors, to your school on 20 and 21 February 2007, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures in September 2006.

This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website.

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents, observed 17 lessons and an assembly, met with the headteacher, staff, groups of pupils, the chair of governors, and a representative from the local authority (LA).

Context

Following the section 5 inspection in September 2006, the school internally appointed an acting deputy headteacher and changed the structure of the senior management team. It has received support from a number of local authority advisors.

Achievement and standards

Pupils' standards of work and the progress they make continue to be inadequate. Since the previous inspection there is some evidence of slightly better progress in science and in reading. The school's procedures for collecting data on pupils' performance are now good but the data is not yet

used effectively to check the progress of particular groups of pupils, for example, checking that girls who were identified in the previous report as not achieving well enough are now doing better. There is not a sufficiently high proportion of good teaching to remove the legacy of under achievement previously identified.

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

- Raise standards, particularly for the girls, in reading, mathematics and science – inadequate progress

Personal development and well-being

The personal development of the pupils is satisfactory, as it was in the previous inspection. Many of the strengths and weaknesses remain. Most pupils say they enjoy coming to school and get particular pleasure from the friendships they make and practical activities such as art. However, several believe work is too easy and that some lessons are boring, so they offer few ideas and contribute little to discussions.

Since the last inspection attendance has slightly improved in some year groups. But with very high levels of absence in Year 3, overall attendance remains unsatisfactory. There are rewards for those who attend regularly, but the school is at an early stage of managing systems to track attendance and there is more to do to work with the families whose children do not attend often enough.

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

- Take stringent measures to improve pupils' attendance – inadequate progress

Quality of provision

The quality of teaching and learning remains inadequate. There remains too much teaching which is inadequate and too little which is good or better. Pupils' learning is therefore inconsistent across years and classes and too many pupils still make slow progress. This is not the case for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities, including those with hearing impairment, who are well supported by staff and therefore they make good progress. The co-ordination of provision for these children is well managed.

The quality of lesson planning is very inconsistent. Planning often does not provide work to meet the range of abilities found in most classes. Teachers do not sufficiently bear in mind the Key Issue from the previous inspection to develop pupils' independent learning and involvement in lessons. Therefore too many lessons and activities lack challenge and do little to motivate pupils. Where teaching is most effective, planning ensures that work is challenging

and interesting. Pupils are actively involved and have opportunities to assess their own work and that of other pupils. As a result pupils enjoy the lesson and make better progress.

Overall there are now good procedures in place for assessing pupils' progress. Assessment is used well to arrange science booster classes for Year 6 pupils. However, the use of assessment data to plan lessons effectively and ensure there is appropriate challenge for all pupils remains inadequate. Marking of pupils' work is inconsistent and they are not sufficiently aware of how to improve their work. Teachers manage pupils well and therefore in the majority of lessons pupils behave well.

At the time of the previous inspection the amount of direct teaching time was short of that recommended nationally. This is still the case.

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

- Improve teaching, the use of assessment, raising expectations of what pupils can achieve, and ensuring that teaching time meets the recommended requirements – inadequate progress
- Develop the pupils' independent learning and involve them in their lessons – inadequate progress

Leadership and management

Since the last inspection, there has been some staffing instability at the school and difficulties in appointing replacement staff. A senior teacher has been temporarily appointed to the role of acting deputy headteacher and has contributed well to the direction of the school and any progress made. The school has received positive support from the remaining leadership team which includes two subject co-ordinators, although there is currently a vacancy at this level.

The leadership team have rightly focussed on trying to improve the quality of teaching and more accurately and regularly tracking pupils' progress. The headteacher and deputy headteacher now monitor teaching and teachers' planning. The headteacher is aware that, while strides have been made in establishing the significance of effective planning and accurate marking of children's work, there is still much work to do in improving its quality and ensuring that the needs of all pupils are met. The impact of better assessment on improving writing, mathematics or on girls' achievement overall is still insecure as it has not been effectively analysed. Timetabling is complex and curriculum requirements have still to be given a more long term view to ensure that each year group is receiving an appropriate amount of direct teaching. Pupils have insufficient access to information and communication technology. There is still much to do in developing pupils' independence and initiative in some lessons.

There remains no accurate evaluation of the school's strengths and weaknesses in the self evaluation form, which has not been updated following the last inspection. However, the leadership team and governors, working very closely with the local authority, have identified where improvement needs to be sustained and embedded, and further areas for immediate development, although many strategies for improvement are still not securely in place. There is insufficient consistently good practice across the school to disseminate.

The school is not currently working from its improvement plan but is trying to work through the action plan drawn up as a result of the last inspection and the action plan formulated with the local authority for putting in place a special programme of increased support for staff and governors. Both documents are used to monitor improvement, but not all staff are consistently implementing all of the necessary actions. There has been a lack of measures that are actually making a difference to raising standards and achievement or impacting on the improving the quality of teaching and learning. Senior leaders realise the significance of their role in raising standards and modelling by example, but require further support to put this into action. Monitoring of standards by subject leaders is developing satisfactorily, but is too slow to bring about change sufficiently rapidly.

The governing body is taking its role seriously and is aware of the need to hold the school to account for its progress. It has received more training and support and has begun to take a more strategic overview of the future direction and organisation of the school. Whilst the local authority has carried out a health and safety audit to comply with regulations, there is still not a thorough system of risk assessment carried out and not enough is done to ensure the school complies with recent safeguarding guidance.

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

- Improve the leadership and management so that there is an energetic drive for raising standards, rigorous monitoring of the provision and focussed strategic planning that tackles all weaknesses rapidly – inadequate progress
- Ensure that the school takes account of all statutory requirements for health and safety – inadequate progress

External support

The LA identified the school as needing a carefully planned programme of additional support prior to the last inspection. The LA has endeavoured to maintain the morale of staff and has helped the school to identify the key areas for improvement. Recent monitoring visits by the LA identified that the quality of teaching and learning and school leadership continue to be major priorities for improvement. The school has received some good quality support from the LA this academic year, including taking part in the intensified support programme (ISP), but it is too early to judge the impact of any strategic support provided.

The LA statement of action is extensive and detailed. It shows how it will support each of the identified areas requiring improvement. Whilst lengthy, it is focused on the immediate issues to be tackled and how small steps in improvement will be prioritised. The LA recognises that many of the strategies already started have not yet been fully implemented by all staff, nor have they had sufficient time to embed. Whilst training has been well received by school staff and governors, the LA realises that further professional development is still needed to ensure consistency of provision across the school.

Main Judgements

Progress since being subject to special measures – inadequate

Newly qualified teachers may not be appointed.

Priorities for further improvement

- Improve the leadership and management of the school at all levels, ensuring that priorities are more swiftly and effectively dealt with to bring about change.
- Raise achievement and standards by ensuring that assessment information is more effectively used to plan lessons which are accurately matched to the needs of learners.
- Ensure that the quality of lessons is consistently good and opportunities for independent learning improve significantly across the school.
- Implement thorough procedures for monitoring and improving pupils' attendance.
- Establish a more thorough system of risk assessment which ensures the ongoing safety of pupils and take action where necessary.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the chair of governors and the Director of Education for Derbyshire

Yours sincerely

Jane Melbourne
H M Inspector