



21 March 2007

The Headteacher  
Leas Park Junior School  
Ley Lane  
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Mansfield  
Nottinghamshire  
NG19 8LD

Dear Mrs Atkins

## SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF LEAS PARK JUNIOR SCHOOL

### Introduction

Following my visit with John Paull and Andrew Lyons, Additional Inspectors, to your school on 13 and 14 March 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 November 2006.

This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website.

### Evidence

Inspectors observed 18 lessons, scrutinised documents and met with you, other members of the school leadership team, the chair of governors, subject leaders, other members of the teaching staff and teaching assistants, and a representative of the local authority (LA).

### Context

Since the school was placed in special measures in November 2006 there have been no significant changes in the school's leadership. There has been disruption to teaching provision which has affected one class in particular. Interim measures are in place and there are plans to bring stability to the provision from Easter 2007.

## Achievement and standards

Progress throughout the school in English and mathematics is starting to improve. Targets are being set, known by each teacher, and used for improved planning and for accountability by senior managers. These targets are being used effectively to help pupils ratchet up their progress and improve their attainment. The school's intervention strategies to bolster the performance of pupils at key performance points are focusing support on lower-attaining pupils. Progress in other subjects remains inconsistent.

Additionally, the school is developing academic support by: focusing on knowing where pupils are when they start in the school; monitoring progress by both standardised tests and teacher assessment; and matching teaching more effectively to pupils' individual learning and monitoring its effectiveness. The school is also developing strategies in the classroom that seek to ensure both girls and boys have equal access to the curriculum. In lessons seen, however, this was not always the case.

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

- improve the progress of pupils, especially girls, by monitoring and evaluating learning more rigorously and providing good academic support where it is needed - satisfactory progress.

## Personal development and well-being

The pupils behave extremely well, are courteous, polite and welcoming to visitors. They generally listen attentively and are keen to learn. Relationships between pupils and between adults and pupils are excellent. Pupils clearly enjoy their education, taking advantage of the many opportunities open to them. The school council is taken seriously and many pupils take responsibility in different ways, making a good contribution to the school and the community. They respond well to the school's efforts to raise their awareness of health issues and the girls are aware of the school's recent efforts to raise their aspirations for later life.

## Quality of provision

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. During this visit to the school the teaching that was seen varied widely in quality. In the less successful lessons, absence of sufficient adaptation of work to meet pupils' different needs is a key factor and, on occasions, boys are still allowed to dominate opportunities to learn, so girls do not make the progress that they should. No inadequate lessons were observed in English and mathematics and pupils' progress is satisfactory. In these important subjects, pupils are carefully grouped

according to their learning needs and work provided appropriately. Effective systems of assessment have been introduced since the last inspection. The resulting information is used to plan teaching effectively, although the picture is not consistent across all other subjects so the pupils' progress overall remains uneven and inadequate. Teaching assistants support pupils very well. They are provided with sufficient information to carry out their role to the benefit of those pupils in their care. Teachers' marking has also improved and pupils are consistently given advice about how to improve their work.

The curriculum is satisfactory. A curriculum review is underway which aims to strengthen links between different subjects and to develop literacy and numeracy skills across the curriculum. Girls' opinions have also been specifically sought to establish their views about what would raise their interest and help them to progress faster. More practical uses of information and communication technology (ICT) to support their learning were a recurring outcome. As a first step, new hardware has been purchased, including electronic whiteboards for all classrooms.

Academic guidance and support have improved. The school is now monitoring progress with an increased rigour. In English and mathematics, pupils are set individual targets which, together with success criteria for reaching them, offer clear guidance about how to meet the expected levels for their age and ability. Pupils themselves say that they like this approach and feel more responsible for their own learning, especially as they are now frequently asked to evaluate how well they have acquired knowledge and skills during lessons. However, the picture remains sketchy in other subjects. In science and ICT, for example, such features are not evident.

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

- increase the rate of progress made by the pupils, especially the more able, in English and mathematics by ensuring that teaching and the curriculum meet the needs of all learners – satisfactory progress.

### Leadership and management

There has been satisfactory progress in developing the leadership team's understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Following the LA's audit of leadership and management, a satisfactory monitoring policy has been developed. This policy outlines a wide range of monitoring activities which are to be established. These include assessments, lesson observations, surveys on marking and planning, scrutinies of pupils' work, and interviews with pupils themselves. Appropriate evaluation procedures are identified to assess the success of the actions planned. A comprehensive timetable of monitoring activities is being implemented for the remainder of this school year. The system of monitoring summary reports (MSRs) is understood by staff; these reports have begun to lead to review and improvement, for

example, through better systems for short-term planning. However, the monitoring policy is insufficiently rigorous with regard to lesson observation procedures and is unlikely to furnish the leadership team with up-to-date information on the school's quality of teaching. Arrangements whereby the MSRs are used to establish coherent and manageable priorities within subsequent school improvement plans are, at this stage, unclear. It is too early to assess the impact of the monitoring policy and the associated activities on the overall quality of provision for pupils.

Work is being undertaken to improve the involvement of governors and the information available to them. For example, liaison with a newly-established partner school has resulted in the adoption of new reporting formats by the headteacher to governors' meetings. Governors are demonstrating a strong willingness to support the school. A system of linking governors to various aspects of the school's work has been established. The LA has conducted some training for governors and more is planned for some individual governors with particular link roles, for example to literacy and numeracy. Governors are visiting the school more, and reports on visits are being produced, although these are little more than brief accounts of activities. At present, however, it is unclear how this greater degree of involvement will lead to more effective scrutiny. The purpose of the link roles is undefined and governors remain unclear about how best to challenge and question the performance of the school.

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

- Improve leadership and management so that it has a more accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and is more clearly held to account by governors – satisfactory progress.

### External support

The LA's statement of action is satisfactory. The statement specifies that the LA expects to see significant improvement at the school within a year. There is a substantial programme of advice and support with a clear commitment to regular and frequent evaluation of the school's progress.

The LA's audit of leadership and management, conducted in December 2006 following the last inspection, provides an accurate analysis of the developments required in skills and understanding. It has also become the starting point for well targeted levels of support. The review of leadership team roles, the advice provided in the drafting of the monitoring policy, and the support in developing lesson observation skills, are some examples of this multi-layered programme. The LA has facilitated a link with a partner school: several visits have taken place and good practice in areas such as assessment processes, and headteacher reports to governors, are being adopted.

The school's link adviser and other consultants and advisory staff are providing good support. Training is being provided to teachers, managers and governors, with the aim of developing the quality of teaching and the leadership and management capacity of the school.

Main Judgements

Progress since being subject to special measures – satisfactory

Newly qualified teachers may be appointed.

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

Yours sincerely

Bob Roberts  
H M Inspector