

5 June 2007

Miss Von Smith
The Headteacher
John Perryn Primary School
Long Drive
Acton
London
W3 7PD

Dear Miss Smith

SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF JOHN PERRYNS PRIMARY SCHOOL

Introduction

Following my visit with Madeleine Gerard, Additional Inspector to your school on 21 and 22 May 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 July 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 the headteacher, subject leaders for English and mathematics, the special needs coordinator, the co-ordinator of a social skills project, two representatives from the local authority and the chair of the governing body.

Context

There have been no significant changes in staffing or the school's roll since the last monitoring inspection.

Achievement and standards

There are signs that the school's efforts to improve the pupils' skills in writing are beginning to have an impact. Assessments of the pupils' attainment show that the proportion on track to reach the expected Level 4 by the end of Year 6 is increasing.

Displays in the corridors show that pupils have been writing in different styles, including poetry, narratives, accounts and instructional texts. Members of the school council felt that their writing was getting better. The assessment information is not complete, but it shows that there are inconsistencies in progress between year groups that can be attributed to variations in the quality of teaching. The information also shows that many pupils in each class are working at levels that are well below what is expected for their age. This has implications for the planning of lessons.

There is limited evidence to point to rising standards in other subjects. Groundwork such as purchasing appropriate resources and book scrutiny has been done in mathematics. Analysis of the results of forthcoming non-statutory tests is to be used to pinpoint areas of weakness in pupils' mathematical understanding and tailor teaching accordingly. Not enough has yet been done to find out the strengths and weaknesses in how mathematics is taught or in teachers' subject knowledge so that support can be given where needed. Rightly, the school has been focusing on bringing about generic, rather than subject-specific improvements in teaching. This means, however, that improvement in pupils' achievement in mathematics has yet to show.

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

- Raise pupils' achievement, particularly in mathematics – inadequate progress

Personal development and well-being

This continues to be an area of relative strength; pupils' behaviour in lessons and about the school is generally good. Pupils are proud of their achievements and enjoy opportunities to work in pairs and talk about their learning together. The school council has been re-launched and pupils are being given more say in what changes they would like the school to make. They are looking forward to being involved in talking to architects about their hopes for the new school building.

After the increases noted at the last visit, attendance levels have dropped back. There are too many absences and the school knows that this is having a negative impact on some pupils' learning, particularly where pupils are frequently absent on the same day of the week. There are plans in place for further work with parents and pupils to encourage regular attendance and good punctuality.

Quality of provision

Despite a rigorous programme of staff training and the regular monitoring of lessons, the quality of teaching and learning is not improving sufficiently quickly to have the necessary impact on standards. The school has not yet reached the point when it can be sure that teaching is consistently satisfactory. There are some good features, however, including teachers' use of interactive whiteboards, which hold pupils' attention well. There are other positive developments, such as: changes to the way writing is taught; better use of resources such as word banks displayed in classrooms

to support independent learning; and opportunities for pupils to work with others to develop their social skills and teamwork

Significant weaknesses remain, however. Teachers' explanations are not consistently clear because their subject knowledge is not always secure. Teachers do not always plan activities that match the range of abilities in the class. In too many lessons, the work is not challenging enough to ensure pupils of all abilities make the progress of which they are capable. In others, tasks are too hard. This is because teachers are not taking what the pupils already know as a starting point when planning lessons. Long-term absence of the post holder has considerably delayed the school's progress in establishing effective systems for assessing how well pupils are progressing. Very recent changes to the senior leadership team mean that the school can now take steps to measure pupils' performance accurately. Marking is currently a focus for development; at the moment it does not make sufficiently clear to pupils what they have done well and what they need to do in order to improve.

The improvements to the curriculum have been sustained and there are a number of popular after school clubs including gardening, recorders, art and computing. Visits to a range of local places of interest have been arranged to enrich the curriculum. Despite improvements in the use teachers make of computers to enhance learning in lessons, opportunities for pupils to use computers to develop their skills in a range of subjects are too limited.

Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities receive satisfactory support. Small group work and individual support for targeted pupils is effective in helping pupils to make progress. Work with an outside agency is helping vulnerable children to develop their social skills and self-esteem. There is too much inconsistency in the support for pupils learning English as an additional language. Systems are not in place to ensure teachers are able to assess the progress these pupils make in learning English and pupils are often set tasks that are too easy for them.

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

- Improve the assessment of pupils' performance and its effective use by teachers in planning challenging work for more able pupils – inadequate progress
- Ensure there is adequate support for pupils with learning difficulties – satisfactory progress
- and for those who do not have English as their home language – inadequate progress

Leadership and management

The headteacher's determination to move the school forward is unwavering. She continues to carry a substantial load and is tackling a number of sensitive and time-consuming matters. Recently, an assistant headteacher temporarily seconded from another school has been able to share some of the workload. In addition, two members of staff have been appointed to the permanent positions of assistant

headteacher as part of the restructuring of the school's management and lines of accountability. They took up post only this week. Senior management has been bolstered by these appointments. The pace of change has begun to pick up, but it has taken some time to get to this point. The headteacher is honest in her assessment of the school's position and knows that improvement has not so far come quickly enough. However, she now has some of the tools needed to do the job.

The next step is to appoint phase leaders who will also have subject responsibility. At the moment, the work of subject leaders varies in its effectiveness. Some subjects and areas are well led, but in others the teachers lack the necessary skills, knowledge or experience to be a driving force for change.

The governing body's work has improved a good deal in a short space of time. There is a full complement of governors, including parent governors, and they are rising to the challenge of helping the school improve in order to come out of special measures. A recent training day for governors was well attended and the revised mission statement that resulted from it shows the high aspirations that governors and the school have.

The fact that the overall pace of change has not been as swift as it should have been is not because of inadequacies in how the school is currently led and managed. The headteacher has tackled many significant problems successfully and has done much of this single-handed. The many systems and procedures, which were lacking, have been put in place or are in the process of being agreed. There are still barriers to overcome, and improving the quality of teaching in order to accelerate progress and raise standards remains a major challenge. Senior staff and the local authority know that satisfactory teaching is not good enough to help pupils make up lost ground. However, there are too few models of consistently good teaching within the school for the improvements to be brought about from within.

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

- Ensure that staff are able to contribute effectively to the management of the school, including their responsibility for leading subjects – satisfactory progress

External support

The local authority (LA) has given the school a great deal of support on many fronts. Its work has been particularly effective in bringing about improvements in provision for pupils who have special educational needs and in literacy, but these are areas where a level of expertise already existed within the school and so subject leaders were able to quickly change and adapt to different systems and methods. Where leadership within the school has been weaker, the impact of the LA's work is not so evident.

Main Judgements

Progress since being subject to special measures – inadequate

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – inadequate

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the chair of governors and the Director of Schools Service for Ealing.

Yours sincerely

Linda McGill
H M Inspector