

11 July 2007

Mr Sean Lawlor
The Executive Headteacher
Pardes House Primary School
Hendon Lane
Finchley
London
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Dear Mr Lawlor

SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF PARDES HOUSE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Introduction

Following my visit with Hugh Protherough, Additional Inspector, to your school on 4 and 5 July 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 October 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 executive headteacher, associate headteacher, deputy headteacher, members of the teaching staff, groups of pupils, the chair and representatives of the governors and a local authority (LA) officer.

Context

Since the last monitoring visit there have been further changes to the teaching staff. Currently three classes are taught by temporary teachers. There will be further changes of staff at the start of next term. The post of headteacher was advertised again but no appointment made.

Achievement and standards

The school has continued to place considerable emphasis on raising standards of writing but since the last visit progress has been, at best, patchy. The degree of consistency that was developing in the boys' work has diminished. While the work in some of their books shows some steady progress in others it is ebbing away. There is too little evidence of the sustained and rapid progress needed to eradicate underachievement. In the national tests at the end of both Years 2 and 6, this year, six out of ten boys reached the expected level in writing. None reached the higher level in Year 2 and only two boys reached the higher level at the end of Year 6. Given their abilities they have not made sufficient progress and standards remain too low.

The results of national tests in science, in Year 6, have improved and indicate that the boys have made satisfactory progress between Years 2 and 6. This has been achieved through considerable revision. However, the progress made by boys in other years is uneven. In some classes the move towards developing their skills and knowledge through investigations has been maintained but in others there has been a return to the overuse of worksheets and consequently progress in some years is inadequate.

The school has not capitalised upon the reasonable start made to improve achievement in writing and science.

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

- Raise pupils' achievement, particularly in writing and science – inadequate progress

Personal development and well-being

Behaviour is not as good as it should be in some lessons. Some boys do not settle quickly enough to the tasks they are set. Sometimes, too much noise, a lack of co-operation and inattention punctuate lessons and slow progress. Steps are now being taken to develop a whole school behaviour policy but expectations of the boys' behaviour as they move around the school remain inconsistent.

Although relationships between the boys and their teachers are generally positive some do not respond to the advice they are given. In Year 4 the marking of the boys' work provides incisive and extremely helpful guidance to improve their next piece of work. There is little evidence that this guidance is used or valued. In discussion, some boys feel that more of their peers should show 'more enthusiasm'. In some lessons there is considerable variation in the boys' attitudes to learning.

Quality of provision

The improvements in teaching seen at the last visit have not been sustained. The profile of the lessons seen was weaker because noisy and uncooperative behaviour

restricted progress in one lesson and there was a lack of challenge in another. A common approach to planning, particularly of English and mathematics lessons, is now established. This generally leads to lessons that are satisfactorily paced. However, the match of work to ability is still not sharp enough in many lessons because some assessments of the pupils' knowledge and skills are inaccurate. For example, in Year 2 a literacy lesson set out to cover what many boys already knew and understood. The writing tasks they were set were almost identical and consequently there was insufficient challenge for a significant proportion of the class. In discussion some older boys gave thoughtful consideration when asked whether they felt the tasks they were set were sufficiently challenging. They said that sometimes the work was 'dead easy' and at other times it made them think. This illustrates very well that matching the task to the boys' abilities remains the key to better progress. While too many lessons fail to provide the boys with tasks that move them quickly to the next step in their learning they will not achieve the high standards of which they are capable.

Many of the boys' books contain lists of targets to help them to improve but they are rarely referred to in lessons and in many books there is no record of them achieving any of them. Useful displays of the writing process are in all classrooms but they are not used as an integral part of the teaching or as a constant reference by the boys.

The shortfall in the time available for the secular curriculum remains and, although the boys now have a broader range of opportunities, the curriculum is constrained. Discussions with the boys reveal some frustrations that result from not having sufficient time to write at length or complete, for example, geographical investigations. They do, however, enjoy the opportunities they have for music, physical education and art.

Occasionally, a few boys do not move promptly from Jewish Studies to their next lesson. As a result, time is lost and some boys lose access to an already constrained curriculum. When they move to their secular curriculum classes, the teachers do not have a formal means of checking that all those who were registered at the start of the day are present. In this respect, arrangements for ensuring the safety of the boys are not sufficiently robust.

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

- Improve the quality of teachers' planning of activities to meet pupils' needs, with appropriate pace and challenge for their differing abilities – inadequate progress
- Use information from the school's assessments to make sure that all work is pitched at the right level to support pupils' learning, to monitor and track the progress that all pupils make and to identify where they could be doing better – inadequate progress

Leadership and management

The difficulties in appointing a headteacher and maintaining a stable staff continue to be a cause for concern. The work of the senior leadership has been interrupted by absence and changes of staff. This has stalled some of the improvements in teaching, learning and consequently the boys' progress. A considerable amount of time has gone into recruiting temporary teachers and then familiarising them with the developments and strategies that had begun to improve the boys' progress.

The teaching and learning continue to be robustly monitored by the LA officer. However, some of the observations of lessons carried out by the senior leadership team are still not incisive enough. The boys' work is regularly scrutinised and areas of weakness are clearly identified but some are ever present and have not yet been successfully tackled. Planning is also routinely monitored and ensures that teachers are appropriately prepared for lessons and that a broad range of subjects is taught. The range of monitoring activities undertaken by the senior leadership gives them a clear picture of where improvements are evident and where weaknesses remain. They are in no doubt about the extent of the task which faces the school.

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

- Rigorously monitor the quality of provision, including the planned changes to the curriculum, and evaluate the effectiveness of actions by their impact on pupils' learning and progress – satisfactory progress

External support

The local authority continues to provide a range of support for the school. In addition to the robust monitoring by the LA officer, the support of advanced skills teachers and consultants provide a valuable range of advice and guidance. The impact of their support is lessened by the changes in staff and the need to establish strategies and developments with the temporary teachers who takeover.

Main Judgements

Since the last visit progress has slowed. The temporary nature of the leadership team, continuing changes of staff and the limited time available for the secular curriculum remain causes for concern.

Progress since being subject to special measures – inadequate

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – inadequate

Newly qualified teachers may not be appointed.

Priorities for further improvement

- Take immediate steps to implement a system to check the attendance of the boys when they move to their secular curriculum classes.
- Implement a whole school policy to promote good behaviour and establish an ethos that encourages positive attitudes to learning in all lessons.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the chair of governors and the Education Officer for Barnet.

Yours sincerely

Christopher Parker
Additional Inspector