

5 June 2007

Mr Laurence Keel
The Headteacher
The Kilburn Park School Foundation
Malvern Road
London
NW6 5RG

Dear Mr Keel

SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF THE KILBURN PARK SCHOOL

Introduction

Following my visit to your school on 22 and 23 May 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 March 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

I observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with all the members of the senior leadership team, a governor and a representative from the local authority (LA). I spoke informally with other staff and pupils during the visit.

Context

There have been no staff changes although the acting headteacher has been offered and accepted a fixed-term contract until December 2009. The school suffered some flooding during the spring term that affected three classrooms. Both classes in Year 5 and one class in Year 4 were taught in the library and ICT suites for a period of five weeks while their rooms were redecorated. This affected the use of these facilities as well as causing some disruption to the pupils and staff concerned. There are likely to be some staff changes at the end of this term. Governors have agreed to strengthen subject leadership in science by advertising this post at an enhanced salary to attract an experienced teacher.

Achievement and standards

The school predicts that pupils in Year 6 are unlikely to reach the target of 70 per cent achieving the expected levels in the tests which were taken recently. This group of pupils has gaps in their learning and, despite the good efforts of some teachers, not all pupils have been able to catch up lost ground. Standards at the top of the school remain lower than expected but are close to expectations in Years 3 and 4. The school is aware of the need to ensure that gaps do not appear in the learning of the younger pupils and is taking appropriate steps to monitor all pupils' progress. The deputy headteacher has held meetings with each class teacher to discuss the progress their pupils are making and to identify those who need more support and those who might underachieve. This strategy has been effective in raising teachers' awareness of pupils' progress as well as in making teachers accountable for the standards their pupils achieve.

Pupils' progress is still patchy across the classes and dependent on the quality and rigour of teaching. Some major differences are appearing in the progress of classes in the same year group. The 'Big Writing' initiative continues to be successful in improving pupils' writing, especially where teachers are rigorous in following the agreed approach in their marking. The challenge now is to ensure that points for improvement are clear, followed up in subsequent pieces of writing and linked to the general targets that are set for pupils. The school's recent focus on basic mathematical processes is helping to identify and plug the gaps in pupils' knowledge and skills.

Personal development and well-being

Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are generally good. Just a small number continue to find it difficult to conform to the school's expectations. Some low level disruption affects the pace of learning where the teacher draws attention to it and behaviour management dominates the lesson. The positive ethos in most classes supports pupils' learning and, at times, good humour and laughter is shared where adults and pupils enjoy the activities together. Exclusions remain low; there has been one fixed-term exclusion since the last monitoring visit. Attendance figures from the start of the spring term to the date of the visit are above average. The number of individual pupils whose attendance causes concern is falling.

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

- Improve behaviour in lessons, particularly amongst older pupils – good progress.

Quality of provision

The focus of this visit was on those teachers who have received support to improve, and on the impact of the school's strategies to improve the quality of teaching and learning.

Teaching is not yet consistently satisfactory. Signs of improvement continue to spread although there is more to do to gain consistency. A new format for lesson planning has been introduced. The vast majority of teachers are working very hard to adopt the new approach which focuses much more on what pupils are expected to learn. Many report that the new system helps them to think more carefully about pupils' learning and their commitment to improving their practice remains strong. Not all teachers consistently use the assessment section on the back of the plan to help them to identify which pupils have or have not succeeded in attaining the lesson's objectives. As a result, they are missing the link between assessing pupils and planning the next steps in their learning. Hence, the biggest challenge for improvement remains that of modifying activities to meet the different learning needs of pupils. Some teachers are now providing effective support for pupils who speak English as an additional language. They focus well on key technical vocabulary, pictures and visual support, and give more opportunities to practise speaking and listening to others. Again, there is much more to do to spread this good practice.

Incessant nagging by teachers is not the problem it was previously. Now though, a continuous positive approach to behaviour management is, at times, detrimental to the pace of lessons. Over use of praise for what should be expected behaviour is counterproductive. Improvements in the learning environment, including displays of pupils' work and the effective use of the interactive whiteboard in lessons, are also too variable. The consistency of support from teaching assistants is improving following training and opportunities to be involved in joint planning with teachers. Most teachers now give assistants a clear brief for the pupils they are going to support.

Systems for supporting pupils with learning difficulties continue to develop well. Support for individuals and groups of pupils is carefully targeted and the targets in their individual education plans have been reviewed. Class teachers have been supported effectively in this process by the inclusion manager and an experienced teacher. The inclusion manager's support for pupils speaking English as an additional language has stalled as a result of her heavy involvement in the programme of booster lessons in the period leading up to the statutory tests for Year 6 pupils. Appropriate plans to re-start this support from the second half of the summer term include external support from the LA's consultant on Ethnic Minority Achievement.

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

- Ensure that all pupils receive consistently good teaching based on careful planning, so that they achieve as well as they can throughout the school – satisfactory progress

Leadership and management

The senior leadership team is gaining strength and confidence to drive the school forward. There is a clear focus on improving teaching and learning to raise standards. At present, members are still supported by LA consultants but are building

capacity to stand alone. Phase leaders have made rapid progress since the last visit. Good team work, modelling of good teaching to colleagues and an increased role in monitoring is enabling them to contribute to raising standards. Subject leadership and management in English and mathematics are good. There is more to do to develop the roles of middle managers as leaders in other subjects.

Monitoring of the quality of teaching has improved significantly since the last visit. It is more regular, has greater rigour and is focused on those areas that need to improve the most. Feedback to staff to identify further areas for improvement is sharp. Guidance on what makes effective teaching has been shared with all staff through training sessions. Support for individuals to improve their teaching is meeting with some, though mixed, success. Senior staff have a clear picture of where further improvement is needed and are prepared to take firm action if this is not secured.

Evaluation of the impact of the action the school is taking is an area for continued development. Priorities for improvement for 2007/2008 are appropriate. The draft outline is yet to be worked into a thorough plan which shows the intended impact of the actions. Good progress in gathering data on pupils' attainment and progress, especially in mathematics and writing, is helping to show up gaps in provision and to help the school to target support and intervention for individuals and groups of pupils.

Governors continue to grow into their role but recognise that the headteacher is still guiding them and there is a way to go before they are at the stage of guiding him. Supported by the LA in financial matters, members are beginning to ask appropriate questions and make decisions about, for example, key appointments. However, the postponement of committee meetings as a result of non-attendance is a cause for concern. On the day of the monitoring visit, the full governing body meeting was not quorate and will need to be rescheduled to secure decisions about important agenda items.

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

- Provide strong leadership and management focused on improving learning – satisfactory progress.

External support

Good support continues, especially for building the capacity of the senior leaders and for governors. Individual support for teachers from consultants is beginning to reap rewards. Further support is scheduled for improving provision for pupils who speak English as an additional language.

Main Judgements

Progress since being subject to special measures – satisfactory

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – satisfactory

One newly qualified teacher may be appointed.

Priorities for further improvement

- Sharpen teachers' planning for different activities to meet pupils' learning needs.
- Provide support for pupils who speak English as an additional language and training for staff to meet their needs in class.
- Embed new systems to gain consistency of practice.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the chair of governors and the Director of School Improvement Services for Brent.

Yours sincerely

Jane Wotherspoon
Her Majesty's Inspector