



18 May 2007

Mr James Shaw
Headteacher
Park View Primary School
Park View
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Dear Mr Shaw

SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF PARK VIEW PRIMARY SCHOOL

Introduction

Following my visit with Vincent Ashworth, HMI, and Peter Jones, Additional Inspector, to your school on 16 and 17 May 2007, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the fourth monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures in November 2005.

This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website.

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, nominated staff, the chair of governors, representatives from the local authority (LA) and a group of pupils. Informal discussions were also held with other pupils, parents and staff.

Context

Since the last inspection one member of staff has left the school. One member of staff is absent on long-term sick leave. Three classes are taught by temporary teachers.

Achievement and standards

The standards achieved by pupils in the statutory assessments in 2006 were reported on in detail in the previous monitoring letter. These were significantly below average in English and science. They were particularly low in mathematics. Recently validated data confirms that the overall progress made by pupils in Key Stage 2 was well below average.

Pupils enter the school with skills and abilities which are well below average. They make good progress in the Nursery class, where there is a strong emphasis on developing social and language skills. They make satisfactory progress in the Reception classes and in Key Stage 1. The trend of improving standards noted on the last monitoring inspection in Key Stage 2 has continued. Inspection evidence and assessment data provided by the school suggest that standards are set to rise above last year's low results. This is particularly the case in mathematics, as the school has appropriately focused its attention and resources on raising standards in this subject. Pupils in Year 6 have benefited from consistently good teaching and from carefully targeted additional lessons in mathematics. A useful series of after-school sessions on mathematics for Year 6 pupils and their parents has also been held. Assessment data, based on regular testing, indicates that standards are also rising in other year groups in Key Stage 2, particularly in Year 4. A major factor in this rise in standards is the improved behaviour of pupils, which means that teachers spend little time dealing with inappropriate behaviour. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD) are making good progress in their learning. They are well supported in class by teaching assistants and receive good support from the coordinator for special educational needs (SENCO) and from outside agencies.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in November 2005.

- Raise standards across the school especially in English and mathematics – satisfactory progress.

Personal development and well-being

Behaviour is good in lessons and around the school. Pupils play safely at break and lunchtimes and use the new play equipment sensibly. They respect the separate games and quiet areas in the playground. Pupils are very aware of how behaviour has improved, particularly over this academic year. Strategies for managing behaviour are well established and pupils appreciate the fairness and consistency with which these are applied. Pupils say they are safe and happy, that there is very little bullying and that it is dealt with effectively. The development of the pastoral action plan, 'partnership contracts' and 'behaviour target cards' has further improved behaviour and

relationships between staff and pupils. As one pupil said, 'teachers listen' to them now.

Attendance has improved considerably, when compared to last year's figures. The school has exceeded its attendance target. The number of persistent absentees has also fallen dramatically. This is the result of close collaboration with the LA's education welfare service, better behaviour and greater stability in staffing. Strategies by the school to follow up absence promptly and an increase in the number of extra-curricular activities have also helped raise attendance. Provision for pupils' future economic well-being is improving as standards in literacy and numeracy rise. There is, however, scope to increase the confidence and abilities of pupils to work independently.

Quality of provision

The quality of teaching observed during the inspection was satisfactory overall. The proportion of good teaching has increased since the previous inspection and no inadequate teaching was observed. In all lessons relationships between pupils and staff were very positive and for the most part pupils worked diligently. They listened carefully to teachers and to other pupils' contributions. Praise was used effectively to motivate, reward and enthuse learners. Planning is satisfactory overall. In the best lessons teachers planned meticulously to match work to pupils' individual needs. They also ensured that all learners, including the more able, were given work that stretched and challenged them. Where teaching was good the pace of learning was fast and pupils' independent learning skills were skilfully developed. For example, the teachers prepared stimulating activities that required pupils to explore and analyse information and then draw their own conclusions from it. Concluding sessions of lessons were well used to evaluate the learning that took place and to focus on key points or misconceptions.

In spite of the improvements since the last monitoring visit, there remains a significant proportion of satisfactory teaching. Common characteristics of these lessons were that teachers talked too much and did not provide enough opportunities for pupils to learn independently. Consequently, pupils became passive and lost attention. The more able pupils were given tasks which did not extend them sufficiently. As a result they did not make as much progress as they could have. Questioning techniques were not always used sufficiently well in order to deepen pupils' knowledge of a topic or to check how well they had understood new concepts.

The school has continued to make good progress in developing and refining systems to assess and track the progress of pupils. The assessment manager regularly updates and evaluates the progress made by pupils and year groups. Account is taken of the social and emotional circumstances of individuals. Careful projections are then made about future standards. The

effectiveness of initiatives is also carefully evaluated. Consequently, the school has a good overview of how well pupils in each year group are making progress and in which subjects. This information is being used effectively by senior managers to formulate next year's priorities. Data is shared with teachers, all of whom have assessment folders to inform and organise their work. Assessment information is well used to identify and target underperformance, particularly in Year 6. Consequently, pupils, often on an individual basis, receive appropriate support which is steadily increasing achievement.

Provision for pupils with LDD is well organised and is improving. The SENCO liaises closely with teachers and teaching assistants to ensure that activities and support for pupils with LDD are well matched to their individual needs. For example, teaching assistants are provided with very clear schemes of work which are reviewed as pupils' needs change. Pupils with LDD have clear targets for literacy and numeracy and these are regularly reviewed. The progress of these learners is carefully tracked. The special needs register is kept up to date. The school has successfully involved parents and carers in regular progress reviews of pupils' individual education plans. The outcomes of reviews are well documented and the agreed targets set for pupils are realistic. There is no register of gifted and talented pupils, but there are plans to create one. Systems to evaluate the impact and effectiveness of the different aspects of support provided are also in development.

The academic guidance which pupils receive has improved. Targets for reading, writing and numeracy are clearly displayed in classrooms. There are many bright displays of useful key words and reminders of learning points. Pupils' work is marked regularly and teachers' comments celebrate individuals' achievements and are congratulatory and motivational. The quality of teachers' comments on the next steps which pupils must take to improve their work is variable. There is some good practice but this is not sufficiently consistent. The school is aware that this is a key area for development and has drafted a marking policy.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in November 2005.

- Raising the proportion of good or better teaching so that it enables all pupils to make good progress – satisfactory progress.
- Implementing systems to assess and track accurately pupils' progress and using the information to direct future action – good progress.
- Ensuring that the support available to pupils helps them to understand how they can improve their work - satisfactory progress.

Leadership and management

The headteacher has continued to provide clear direction and good leadership for the school. He is very ably supported by the deputy headteacher. They share a very clear vision for the school and how it should develop. Several initiatives, led by the headteacher, have had a major impact on teaching and learning. The 'behaviour for learning' policy has ensured high expectations of good behaviour. The firm, fair and consistent application of this policy has reduced the amount of teaching time lost to poor behaviour. The school's system of values and rules, known as the 'Park View Values', is well understood by pupils and has contributed strongly to improved attitudes to learning. The more recent 'attentive listening' initiative has built on these and has improved pupils' listening skills. Combined with a sharp focus on standards and an enriching diet of extra-curricular activities for pupils, these initiatives have helped strengthen the positive learning climate of the school.

Additional priorities identified at the last monitoring visit have been well tackled. A very useful two-day training event has also been held for all staff and governors. This allowed the headteacher's vision for the school to be reiterated and provided opportunities for staff to contribute ideas about the development of the school and its curriculum. It also strengthened links between staff and governors and added to the school's greater sense of teamwork. Consequently, morale is high. The school's leadership is well supported by the senior management team. This meets regularly to discuss and act on major issues, such as the outcomes of monitoring. The school's self-evaluation of its performance is improving. The school improvement plan is regularly reviewed by the headteacher. Useful summaries of pupils' attainments are well analysed to chart the progress of each year group. Assessment data are used well to identify underperformance, focus resources effectively on target groups of pupils and to gauge the effectiveness of strategies to improve learning.

The leadership continues to hold staff to account for their work. Robust action has been taken to tackle and minimise absences. A full cycle of lesson observations has been completed by the headteacher since the previous inspection. Useful written feedback is given to staff, although there is scope to sharpen this. Other members of the senior management team have also begun to monitor lessons. However, information from lesson observations is not collated into an overall formal summary which can be used to inform governors and to track progress in improving teaching and learning. The managers of core subjects monitor work in their area in a variety of ways. They are drawing up portfolios of exemplary work to show colleagues the standards expected of pupils. However, the management of other subjects is underdeveloped. Managers of foundation subjects have been allocated some time to check the school's work in their areas. There are apt plans to use a training day to share their findings with other staff.

Effective steps have been taken to improve teaching. Well considered and targeted support, including use of the LA's consultants, has meant that unsatisfactory teaching has been successfully tackled. Several staff have observed good practice in teaching within the school. Staff have not yet had opportunities to visit other schools to observe good teaching in different settings. A useful system of informal one-to-one discussions between senior managers and staff has been initiated where, for example, issues regarding the improvement of teaching are shared and advice is given. A national strategy to raise standards, the Intensifying Support Project (ISP), is well supported by the headteacher. Staff have worked hard to put it into practice. In every classroom, targets for pupils are prominently displayed and 'learning walls' highlight valuable learning points. However, there are few exemplars of work which explain to pupils what they must do in order to achieve a high standard.

Links with parents have been strengthened. Their views have been recently sought through a questionnaire and initial results of this process are positive. Parents report that they are better informed through newsletters about developments and that the school is easy to approach if they have any concerns. A number of courses have been held for parents, some of which are designed to help them with their children's learning. A school website has recently been set up. Governors are very supportive of the headteacher and kept well informed of teaching and learning issues. Governors' committees meet regularly. Governors are gradually developing their role as a critical friend to the school. Several have been appointed to shadow subject areas, such as mathematics and information and communication technology. One governor has met with a subject manager and has reported back verbally to the governing body. This approach could be usefully developed and made more formal. There is scope to expand and improve the governors' existing development plan.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in November 2005.

- Establishing a strong, stable and positive team providing coherent leadership and management – good progress.

External support

The LA is providing good support for the school. It is funding the ISP, which has contributed to improvements in teaching. It is committed to fund this initiative over the next academic year. School improvement officers visit regularly to discuss and check on the progress of the school. A number of consultants from the LA have monitored the school's work and provided advice. The LA has also allocated extra financial resources to the school, which has drawn appropriately on the LA's personnel and support services.

Two local collaboratives support the school in a variety of ways. A special school support centre provides additional help for pupils with LDD.

Main Judgements

Progress since being subject to special measures – satisfactory.

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – satisfactory.

Newly qualified teachers may only be appointed with the permission of the lead inspector.

Priorities for further improvement

- Develop the role of subject managers.
- Extend day-to-day assessment procedures and ensure they are applied consistently.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the chair of governors and the Director of Children's Services of Knowsley Metropolitan Borough.

Yours sincerely

Michael McIlroy
H M Inspector