

9 July 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 to your school on 5 and 6 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 November 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

In the course of my visit I observed four lessons, talked to pupils, scrutinised documents and met with you, the deputy headteacher, other members of the School Leadership Team, the chair of governors, subject leaders 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 some disruption to teaching provision which has affected one class in particular.

At the conclusion of my first visit to your school on 13 and 14 March 2007, it was agreed that the wording of the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in November 2006 would be reconfigured to enable the school to develop its provision and report on its progress more clearly. This letter uses the re-configured wording agreed at that visit.

Achievement and standards

The latest data supplied by the school indicates that the current levels of attainment of pupils in Years 3, 4 and 5 remain below what might be expected. However, the rate of progress has increased significantly and over the last year pupils have made above average progress. This is particularly the case with the current Year 5 pupils in reading and writing where the current rate of progress is well above average. Furthermore the data indicates that girls are making at least satisfactory progress. Again, this is particularly true of the Year 5 girls, where progress in reading, writing and mathematics is well above average. The school was not in a position at the time of this visit to present data on the progress of the more able pupils across the school, although the data presented suggests that the rate of progress of this group is also increasing.

Personal development and well-being

Pupils continue to behave very well, work cooperatively, and enjoy school a great deal. They are friendly and courteous to visitors and are keen to talk about school. They play constructively together in the playground. Pupils were observed operating a tuck shop on behalf of the school council and there is evidence that the school's emphasis on being healthy is having an impact on pupils' lifestyles.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. In the four lessons observed pupils made at least satisfactory progress and in two of them progress was good. Pupils are carefully grouped within classes according to their learning needs and work is provided appropriately. Teaching assistants were being well used, in one case supporting the most able pupils with a challenging task. In some cases the lesson plans indicated that teachers were aware of the need to target particular pupils in their questioning and in the lesson they did so effectively. The use of lesson objectives and success criteria to help pupils understand what they are aiming towards is consistent. The use of traffic light cards to check on pupils' understanding is common, although its use can at times be cursory. In the lessons seen on this visit, there were no occasions when boys were allowed to dominate opportunities to learn. The classroom environments are not only colourful and very well presented, but are clearly focused on learning and progress. The work of pupils is displayed and celebrated effectively. The school's marking policy, three stars and a wish,

was being used in most of the sets of exercise books seen, but not all. Marking is mostly conscientious and up-to-date, although some books have not been marked for some time. Relations between pupils and teachers were very productive and pupils were keen to learn and collaborate well together.

The school's curriculum is satisfactory. The school is committed to making learning as enjoyable as possible and has recently had a very successful thematic day, based on the theme of Flight and making creative use of the Wallace and Gromit cartoon adventure. Plans are in place for further such ventures. Plans are also well advanced for the implementation of a new, thematically based curriculum for September 2007. All staff have been included in the planning for this, which is designed to strengthen cross-curricular links between foundation subjects whilst preserving the central importance of literacy and numeracy. Staff are convinced that the new curriculum will give opportunities for greater enjoyment of learning although it is not clear at the moment how the new curriculum will better meet the learning needs of all pupils. The role of subject leaders and school managers in monitoring and evaluating the new arrangements for the curriculum needs to be more clearly established.

A new computer programme, 'Classroom Monitor' is being introduced across the school. At present it is being used only by subject leaders to familiarise themselves with its use and potential. The programme is intended for use by all teachers and plans are for it to be in full use for the new school year in September 2007. The intention of the development is that teachers will be enabled to better monitor pupil progress and identify those in need of further support.

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

- Ensure that teaching and the curriculum meet the learning needs of all pupils so that the rate of progress, especially of girls and the more able increases throughout the school – satisfactory progress.

Leadership and management

There has been satisfactory progress in terms of monitoring and evaluating learning and improving leadership and management. The headteacher is demonstrating the capacity and drive to take the school forward. The overall strategy of developing capacity across the leadership team is being implemented.

The school has begun to implement its new monitoring policy effectively. The policy itself has been slightly amended and improved with regard to lesson observation processes following the last monitoring visit. During the summer term the headteacher has conducted a series of lesson observations. These have taken place across a range of subjects and have been appropriately

focused on what pupils have learnt. They have begun to furnish her with up-to-date information on the school's quality of teaching. Other elements of the policy have also been introduced. Scrutinies of planning and work have taken place in science, and information and communication technology (ICT). These exercises were planned with external advice and support and involved other members of the leadership team and subject leaders. In this way the school is beginning to build the capacity and effectiveness of leadership across the school. The system of Monitoring Summary Reports (MSRs), which summarise the outcomes of these exercises and track and report on the consequent management actions, is now in place. Links between the MSRs and the school improvement plan for 2007/08 are in place, although the link could be more explicit. Reports go to the school's leadership team and to governors. The school is taking action to intervene with teachers requiring support and using external support effectively. Whilst the culture of monitoring and evaluating the work of the school is thus developing well, the school needs to establish what actions will be expected as part of the routine operation of the policy from senior and middle leaders.

The school is in the middle of a number of new initiatives: a new curriculum; the implementation of a new monitoring policy; and new computer software for use by teachers in tracking pupil progress. The importance of these initiatives for the development of the school is clear. However, greater clarity is required amongst the school leaders and managers with regard to exact responsibilities for these developments so that managers at various levels are clear about what is expected of them, both in terms of implementation and evaluation.

Work continues to improve the involvement of governors and the information available to them. However, the degree to which they hold leaders and managers to account remains limited. Governors are meeting more frequently and are focused on the current action plans. A new reporting format for the headteacher's report is now in use. Training has been provided for two governors in undertaking link roles, and further such training is planned for the whole governing body for later this year. Link visits and subsequent reporting to the governing body have begun, although governors have had no involvement in curriculum developments or improvement planning. There is no appropriate forum at present for governors to consider the standards of achievement and progress of pupils. There is limited evidence at this stage of governors scrutinising and challenging the work of the school.

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

- Introduce more rigorous monitoring and evaluation of all learning so that good academic support is provided when needed, especially in English and mathematics – satisfactory progress.

- 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 continues to provide good support for the school. Training and advice of various types has been provided for the headteacher, individual governors, subject leaders and for the teaching staff as a whole on a range of matters. Advice has been provided to the school flexibly and responsively, on initiatives such as the development of the new curriculum. Support has been provided, at the request of the school, for individual teachers. The LA is seeking to be responsive to the needs of the school whilst at the same time building its capacity for the future. Its efforts in this respect are appreciated by the school. The impact of the LA work can be seen, for example, in the greater familiarity of school managers with progress data. Further training plans are in place. The LA is monitoring the overall progress of the school through its termly monitoring procedures.

Main Judgements

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – satisfactory.

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