

21 June 2007

Mr P Clayton
Langley Mill Junior School
Bailey Brook Crescent
Langley Mill
Nottingham
NG16 4FZ

Dear Mr Clayton

SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF LANGLEY MILL JUNIOR SCHOOL

Introduction

Following my visit with Martin Newhall and Jill Bavin, Additional Inspectors, to your school on 19 and 20 June 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 September 2006.

This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website.

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents, observed lessons, met with the headteacher, staff, groups of pupils, the chair of governors, and a representative from the local authority (LA).

Context

Since the last monitoring visit on 20 and 21 February 2007, the school has undergone further staffing changes. The senior leadership structure remains the same but there has been some movement in class teachers. This has resulted in two teachers from other local schools taking up secondments here and the amalgamation of three year 5 sets into two. One of the secondees leaves the school at the end of the summer term. For the next academic year, the school is retaining the other secondee and has secured another temporary teacher.

The school continues to receive extensive support from a number of LA advisors. The school has now increased the amount of teaching time pupils receive by reducing the lunchtime by 15 minutes each day. To improve attendance, an educational welfare officer works in school one day each week with children who do not attend often enough and their families.

Achievement and standards

Pupils' standards of work and the progress that they make continue to be inadequate. Learning and progress are inconsistent across the school and the ongoing legacy of underachievement remains. Where the quality of teaching is good, pupils are making good progress and achieving well. Girls still achieve less well than boys. Performance data is not used rigorously enough to shape planning and teaching to ensure that pupils make enough progress. The teacher assessments for the current Year 6 pupils indicate a drop in standards from 2006 and that pupils have made too little progress since they took the Year 2 tests. Progress in reading across the school is broadly satisfactory. The main areas of concern are pupils' achievement in mathematics in all year groups and the progress made by the youngest pupils in school.

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

- Raise standards, particularly for the girls, in reading, mathematics and science – inadequate progress

Personal development and well-being

Pupils' personal development is satisfactory and has improved further since the previous monitoring visit. They enjoy lessons in some subjects more than before because they find the work harder and more interesting – for example when using games in literacy and when conducting experiments in science. They enjoy mathematics less, where sometimes they are not challenged enough. They confirm that they have more chances to participate actively in lessons than previously, but they are still too overly-directed by adults. Pupils appreciate newly introduced systems for evaluating their own learning which they share with their teachers. The school has recently provided play equipment for pupils to use at lunch time. This has been a popular move and has improved pupils' behaviour in the playground.

There is now a properly managed system for tracking pupils' attendance. Rates of attendance at 94.1% overall have risen and are now much closer to the national average. Nevertheless, the rates of absence in Year 3 remain too high, and girls still do not attend as regularly as boys throughout the school.

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

- Take stringent measures to improve pupils' attendance – satisfactory progress

Quality of provision

The quality of teaching and learning remains inadequate overall. Too much teaching remains inadequate or only just satisfactory. The assessment co-ordinator has regular meetings with class teachers to discuss the progress of pupils in individual classes. This is good practice. However, the use of assessment data to plan lessons effectively and to ensure that work is well matched to the needs and abilities of pupils is still inadequate. Only a minority of lessons provide a stimulating and demanding range of learning activities that captivate and then sustain the interest of the pupils. Pupils' involvement in learning, through the use of questioning and children sharing their ideas with each other as 'talk partners,' is now a more regular feature of lessons, but not enough is done to develop pupils as independent learners. Where teaching is most effective, expectations are high, tasks are exciting and relevant, and incisive questioning keeps pupils on their toes and ensures that their learning is continually checked. As a result, pupils enjoy the lessons more and make better progress. However, there remain too many lessons where expectations of what pupils can achieve are not high enough.

At the time of the initial inspection the amount of direct teaching time was short of that recommended nationally. This now meets requirements. The school has begun to monitor how much time it is spending on each subject; however literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) are not used enough in other subjects. Increased time for science allows for more practical work to be undertaken in lessons. All subjects are now routinely planned to include learning objectives and, in a proportion of lessons in core subjects, plans identify modified work to suit pupils with different needs. This is rarely the case in foundation subjects.

The marking of pupils' work remains inconsistent because this is not sufficiently guided by a comprehensive policy that makes expectations clear in all subjects. Where there is clarity in guidance, this is still not adhered to by all staff. Consequently, pupils do not know which are the strong features of their work and how to address any shortcomings. They are also misguided by teachers praising work of an unacceptable standard.

Teachers continue to manage pupils well and therefore, in the majority of lessons, pupils behave well. Previous strengths in supporting hearing impaired pupils and those with learning difficulties and disabilities have been maintained.

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

- Improve teaching, the use of assessment, raising expectations of what pupils can achieve, and ensuring that teaching time meets the recommended requirements – inadequate progress
- Develop the pupils' independent learning and involve them in their lessons – inadequate progress

Leadership and management

Staffing remains fragile at the school, but this has currently been secured for the forthcoming academic year. The amalgamation of three year 5 sets into two has in many ways been successful and staff work effectively as a team across this year group. The acting deputy headteacher is continuing to contribute well to the direction of the school, including helping to prioritise the action plan. The school has also received good commitment and support from the remaining leadership team. There is still a gap in co-ordinating ICT across the school and no plans as yet for a permanent member of staff to take on this role.

The local authority has supported the school in trying to improve the quality of teaching. However, the quality of teaching remains much the same as it was at the last monitoring visit. The leadership team have monitored lessons and lesson planning, but this has had very little impact on improving teaching and learning by ensuring that principles of good practice are consistently adopted and that pupils' independent learning in lessons is worthwhile to their progress.

The school now has plentiful data available as systems are in place to regularly track pupils' progress. There has been little impact of better assessment on improving writing, mathematics or on girls' achievement overall. There remains some variation between the teacher assessments and the levels actually achieved. Work has not been sufficiently moderated and pupils do not understand the level they are working towards or how to get there. Not enough thought has been given to pupils accessing ICT across the curriculum.

The leadership team and governors, working in conjunction with the local authority, have accurately identified where improvement needs to be embedded, and further areas for immediate and sustained development. Some new strategies are securely in place and there is satisfactory progress in two of the areas for improvement identified at the initial inspection. The school has not made sufficient progress overall. Staff are implementing some

of the necessary actions, but this is not always monitored by the school effectively to inform school improvement. Consequently, action taken has had very limited impact on raising standards and achievement or improving the quality of teaching and learning. Senior leaders realise the significance of their role in raising standards and modelling by example, but require further support to enable them to do this.

The governing body is making effective progress in understanding its role and in more rigorously challenging the school and holding the school to account. It has received further training and support and has begun to take a more strategic overview of the future direction and organisation of the school. There is now a thorough system of risk assessment carried out and the school now complies with recent safeguarding guidance.

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

- Improve the leadership and management so that there is an energetic drive for raising standards, rigorous monitoring of the provision and focussed strategic planning that tackles all weaknesses rapidly – inadequate progress
- Ensure that the school takes account of all statutory requirements for health and safety – satisfactory progress

External support

The external support provided for the school by the LA has been increased further since the last monitoring visit. The LA works hard to continue to help the school to identify, and remain focussed on, the key areas for improvement. The LA recognises that the quality of teaching and learning and school leadership remain major priorities for improvement. The school continues to take part in the intensified support programme (ISP). It is disappointing that, whilst the level of support from the LA has been extensive this academic year, the impact of any strategic support provided remains limited.

Main Judgements

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

The priorities for further improvement remain as at the last monitoring visit, but priorities 4 and 5 only require maintaining rather than significant further development.

- Improve the leadership and management of the school at all levels, ensuring that priorities are more swiftly and effectively dealt with to bring about change.
- Raise achievement and standards by ensuring that assessment information is more effectively used to plan lessons which are accurately matched to the needs of learners.
- Ensure that the quality of lessons is consistently good and opportunities for independent learning improve significantly across the school.
- Maintain the procedures for monitoring and improving pupils' attendance.
- Continue to ensure that the system of risk assessment contributes to keeping pupils safe and take action where necessary.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the chair of governors and the Director of Education for Derbyshire

Yours sincerely

Jane Melbourne
H M Inspector Education, Learning and Skills