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Mrs H Beeken
St Paul's Community Primary and Nursery School
Queens Road
Spalding
Lincolnshire
PE11 2QJ

Dear Mrs Beeken

Special Measures: Monitoring Inspection of St Paul's Community Primary
and Nursery School

Introduction

Following my visit with Keith Sadler, Additional Inspector, to your school on 20-21 June 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 January 2006.

This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website.

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, senior management team (SMT), subject leaders, other school staff, groups of pupils, parents, the chair and vice chair of governors and a representative from the local authority (LA).

Context

Since the last visit in March 2007, the reception class teacher has resigned her post. An experienced teacher has been recruited to replace her from September 2007. The Year 3 teacher has had further lengthy periods of absence and has also resigned. The school is in the process of recruiting a new teacher. The teacher's prolonged absence has continued to be appropriately managed by the school in an effort to minimise disruption to learning by the class. Two new cleaners have been appointed to improve the cleanliness of the building. In addition, two midday supervisors, who also have teaching assistant responsibilities, have resigned to increase their liaison

time with teachers. New appointments have been made. The senior administrator has reduced her hours. A second administrative assistant has been appointed to ensure that all duties and responsibilities are fully met. Confirmation has been received that the school will be the site for a Children's Centre from March 2008.

Achievement and standards

The unvalidated national Key Stage 1 test results for 2007 show that standards in writing and mathematics have improved. Pleasingly, the proportion of pupils achieving at the higher levels in both subjects has increased. Standards in reading are similar to those of 2006. Although attainment remains below that found nationally, increasing numbers of pupils are making satisfactory and often better progress. Progress in writing has quickened in all year groups except Year 3. Teachers' assessments show that standards remain well below average in Year 6. Although standards have improved in mathematics, and in English at the higher levels, they still remain too low. The school's tracking data and pupils' work show that too many pupils are not achieving as much as they could, although there have been good improvements in reading particularly at the higher levels. Work in mathematics and science throughout Key Stage 2 does not sufficiently challenge pupils or build on their prior learning. Too many are doing similar work, which limits their rates of progress. Despite improved teaching in Year 6, the legacy of under achievement of this particular group of pupils has made the gap too wide to close by the time they leave the school. Data analysis of the current Year 5 class shows a more promising picture. Many pupils are achieving standards expected of them and most are making increased rates of progress in English and mathematics. Following recent staffing difficulties, rates of progress made by the current Year 3 cohort are a cause for concern. Although the teacher currently working in the class has arrested the decline, the school knows that additional support is required next year to plug the gaps. Standards in science and information and communication technology (ICT) are below average by Year 2 and well below average in Year 6. Investigative learning is particularly weak and not sufficiently well developed throughout the school. Following the recent focus on reading, writing and mathematics, the school now has clear plans to raise standards in other curriculum areas. Managers are now being tasked to shine the spotlight on their subjects. Pupils with English as an additional language (EAL) make good progress because of the effectively targeted support they receive.

Personal development and well-being

The pupils' personal development continues to be good. Behaviour is good in lessons and around the school. Pupils have positive attitudes to both school and learning. In lessons, pupils' personal development is supported well because teachers are providing an increasing number of opportunities for pupils to collaborate together and discuss their work in groups and pairs. This helps pupils to value other's opinions. In addition, the effective strategy of getting pupils to check each other's work also strengthens personal development. Because the support provided by teaching assistants and learning mentors is of good quality, pupils who find learning hard and those that have emotional and behavioural difficulties also make good progress in their personal development. Pupils' understanding of the importance of

healthy lifestyles is good. They talk with relish about the 'Activate' sessions held after each break in the school day. As well as providing good aerobic exercise, these help prepare pupils for the ensuing lessons. They also develop a good understanding of the importance of healthy eating. For example, Year 5 pupils' investigations of balanced diets enabled these pupils to discuss the reasons for healthy eating.

Although attendance has risen in the past year, it remains below the national average. The behaviour mentors are having a positive impact on pupils' attendance particularly on the increasing number of new arrivals from Eastern European countries. Good relationships are established with parents and a good induction programme supports new pupils into school well.

Quality of provision

There have been significant improvements in the quality of teaching and learning since the last visit. It is now satisfactory with good features. Relationships between adults and pupils continue to be good throughout the school. Staff manage pupils well. Teachers have now embedded the good practices observed at the last inspection which led to good learning. Objectives for lessons are invariably shared and, in the best lessons, pupils themselves help to identify the success criteria of what they will be learning. In addition, particularly in English and mathematics, teachers are skilful in reviewing previous learning and setting a good context for lessons. Teachers' planning is of good quality in English and mathematics which, taken with the close tracking of pupils' progress, enables work to be matched to each group's ability. However, this is not the case in science. Here, the work set is not sufficiently matched to pupils' abilities and this leads to under-achievement by all groups of pupils. On occasion, for example, the work is too hard for those that find learning difficult and much too easy for higher attaining pupils. This is particularly the case in practical lessons when pupils are carrying out investigations.

The deployment of support staff has been reviewed since the last inspection and is now good. The teaching assistants, support teachers and learning and behaviour mentors all make a positive contribution to pupils' achievement by providing well-conceived and focused sessions for pupils both in class and in withdrawal groups. Pupils enjoy the opportunity to work in small groups and their learning in these sessions is good.

The curriculum continues to be satisfactory though there have been improvements. Weaknesses identified in the timings of some lessons at the previous inspection have been removed. The day is now used much more purposefully and the school has rightly introduced additional sessions for developing pupils' reading and writing skills. This is paying dividends as pupils' achievement in these areas is strengthening. The use of ICT is satisfactory. Pupils enjoy using the computer suite for lessons and opportunities for them to make use of computers beyond the ICT suite are being developed. However, when researching, some pupils simply copy blocks of text. They are not selective enough in identifying or using the most appropriate and relevant pieces to support their work. In addition, the loss of internet connectivity causes staff and pupils frustration.

Academic guidance has improved and is now of good quality in English and mathematics. Amendments to the National Primary Strategy have been made and the school has refined its tracking of progress in order to better target work. This too, is a reason why progress has strengthened in these subjects.

Judgement

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

- Raise standards and achievement in English, mathematics and science by improving the quality of teaching throughout the school, to reach at least satisfactory levels – satisfactory progress
- Establish effective assessment and tracking procedures and use the data gained to provide challenging targets and work for all pupils- satisfactory progress

Leadership and management

Since the previous monitoring visit, the headteacher, deputy head and senior management team have continued to focus sharply on the priority of improving teaching and raising standards. Senior leaders and governors have a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and appropriate actions have been taken to bring about improvements. Meetings between individual teachers and members of the leadership team are successfully focusing on individual pupils. This keeps a check on the progress they are making and ensures that support is appropriately targeted to raise standards. The subject managers for English, mathematics and assessment provide good leadership. With appropriate support and professional advice from the LA, they are leading a range of initiatives to improve pupils' progress. For example, the recent focus on guided reading and phonics teaching is beginning to have a good impact. Standards are starting to rise. A series of meetings for parents have also helped inform them of the part they can play in helping their children to improve. Initiatives are monitored rigorously through lesson observations, scrutiny of pupils' work, and regular assessments. 'Learning Walks' by staff and governors have been very helpful in increasing their understanding of the work of the school. The 'Review of Learning' document is a very comprehensive and evaluative summary of the school's work. It gives an accurate indication of what the school needs to do next to improve. The school has constructed an appropriate improvement plan. However, it needs strengthening by identifying more clearly the role that governors can play in checking out the actions. Other subject leaders such as those of science and ICT are beginning to increase their confidence and develop their role. They have undertaken activities such interviews with pupils and scrutiny of work, and are beginning to gather and analyse data. The school knows that more work is needed to develop further the role of subject leaders. The work of the governing body continues to be satisfactory. A small core of governors is actively involved with the school. Plans are in place for curriculum governors to find out more about what is happening in their nominated subject. The recently introduced 'Staff and Governor Diary' is good. It provides a useful overview of the governors' roles and gives a clear guide to responsibilities and future meetings.

Judgement

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

- Improve leadership and management at all levels by ensuring that the headteacher, senior management team and subject co-ordinators monitor the work more rigorously – satisfactory progress
- Establish and promote governors' involvement and influence so that they can contribute more effectively to monitoring and evaluating the school's performance – satisfactory progress

External support

The school has continued to benefit from a good level of support from the LA. The support of consultants and advisers has been beneficial in developing the skills of senior leaders as well as providing targeted support for individual teachers. The LA recognises the progress the school has made in the last four months and plans to continue to support proportionate to need.

Main Judgements

Progress since being subject to special measures – satisfactory

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – satisfactory

Newly qualified teachers (NQT) may be appointed subject to the following qualifications. The school must involve the LA in the appointment process. The NQT should be mentored in school by a teacher of proven high quality. All NQT entitlements must be met in full. Appropriate internal and external development, support and induction must be provided.

Priorities for further improvement

- Induct and support newly appointed staff to ensure they settle quickly into school routines and help improve the quality of education for pupils.
- Target pupils in Year 4 during 2007-08 in order to reduce the affects of the disruption experienced during the past academic year.
- Increase opportunities for subject leaders other than English and mathematics to check pupil's progress and the school's provision in their subject, so that they can begin to address areas of weakness and raise standards further.
- Identify and clarify governing body responsibilities in the school improvement plan, to ensure they check more closely the action taken by the school.

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

Yours sincerely

Paul Weston
Her Majesty's Inspector