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29 April 2008

Mr Robert Leach
The Acting Headteacher
Pardes House Primary School
Hendon Lane
Finchley
London
N3 1SA

Dear Mr Leach

SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF PARDES HOUSE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Following my visit with Keith Williams, Additional Inspector, to your school on 1 and 2 April 2008, 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 October 2006. The monitoring inspection report is attached and the main judgements are set out below.

Progress since being subject to special measures – inadequate

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – satisfactory

Newly qualified teachers may not be appointed.

This letter and monitoring inspection report 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.

I am copying this letter and the monitoring inspection report to the Secretary of State, the chair of governors and the Education Officer for Barnet.

Yours sincerely

Christopher Parker
Additional Inspector

Report from the fourth monitoring inspection: 1 and 2 April 2008

Evidence

The inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with a group of boys, the acting headteacher, the advisor to the governors, members of the teaching staff, representatives of the governing body and a representative from the local authority.

Context

Since the last visit the Key Stage 1 coordinator has returned to work. She has taken over the Year 2 class from a temporary teacher.

Achievement and standards

The signs of improving progress seen at the last visit have been maintained because the staffing situation has been far more settled. The boys are now making satisfactory progress in many lessons and this is reflected in their improved work.

Although the boys are making better progress in writing and science there is a great deal still to do to eradicate the legacy of underachievement. The range and volume of work in the boys' books has increased. The quality of their writing has improved although presentation and handwriting remain weak. The boys now have more opportunities to write for a range of purposes and are beginning to use their skills in other subjects. In science, the boys are benefiting from less didactic approaches and more opportunities to carry out investigations. Older boys are able to make predictions, record their observations and many can draw appropriate conclusions. Whilst the school has taken steps to provide a more systematic approach to developing writing and science skills, some inconsistency remains. This means that the boys' progress remains uneven.

Improvement in mathematics is more limited because the school is only just beginning to turn its attention to this subject. Nevertheless, the work in the boys' books in some classes, notably Year 6, shows they are making better progress. These boys are benefiting from opportunities to use their improved mathematical skills to solve problems.

The art work on display is of a good quality. The specialist teaching of art and design has resulted in much improved standards and increased enjoyment for the boys.

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

- Raise pupils' achievement, particularly in writing and science – satisfactory

Personal development and well-being

There are now higher expectations of behaviour, manners and attitudes. This has resulted in a marked improvement not only in the boys' behaviour in classrooms, in the corridors and on the playground but also in the general atmosphere within the school. The enjoyment resulting from a broader range of subjects being taught has now extended into other aspects of school life. The boys say that they now enjoy playtimes and some commented that music is a favourite lesson. They are now more positive and receptive. As a result they are ready to learn at the start of each lesson and most concentrate well on the tasks they are set. This improvement provides a secure foundation for the rapid progress which is still needed to improve achievement and raise standards.

The school is now providing healthy sandwich lunches on some days. Although some boys were originally sceptical of this development it has proved to be very popular and they now enjoy and have a greater understanding of the importance of healthy eating. However, opportunities for exercise and sport are still limited by the restricted time available for the curriculum.

Quality of provision

The improved teaching profile seen on the last visit has been maintained and is reflected in the better progress the boys are making. All of the lessons seen on this visit were at least satisfactory but too few were of the good quality needed to rapidly accelerate achievement. A whole-school approach to planning is not yet well established. However, there is an increasing consistency in the quality of planning with more lessons now taking better account of the needs of boys of different abilities. The increased support for some less able boys is beginning to accelerate their progress but in too many lessons there still is not enough challenge for the more able boys.

Most lessons now begin with the teachers making clear to the boys what they are expected to learn. The tasks the teachers set are generally appropriate but in some lessons the pace ebbs and flows resulting in satisfactory rather than good sustained progress. The management of behaviour has improved and the relationships between the teachers and the boys are more productive.

The time available for the National Curriculum remains a long way short of that in most schools. However, improvements to the range of subjects taught, most notably art, design and music, have had a marked impact on the boys' enjoyment. These subjects are taught by specialist teachers. The art work on display is now creating a more vibrant working environment that shows that work of good quality is valued. The time spent on science is now reflected in the increased volume of work in the boys' books. Whilst there is more work in their history and geography books it is not substantial enough to provide the expected coverage in these subjects.

The use of targets and some improvements in marking are helping the boys to be clearer about what they need to do to improve. Approaches are not consistent throughout the school. Most, but not all, of the boys' work is marked. Some of the

comments the teachers make contain useful guidance but these are not always acted upon and some teachers do not follow them up.

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

- Use the information from the school's assessments to make sure that all work is pitched at the right level to support pupils' learning, to monitor and track the progress that all pupils make and to identify where they could be doing better – satisfactory
- Improve the quality of teachers' planning of activities to meet pupils' needs, with appropriate pace and challenge for their differing abilities – satisfactory

Leadership and management

Since the acting headteacher was appointed some important improvements have been made to the behaviour and attitudes of the boys. This provides a more secure basis for tackling the many weaknesses that remain. However, approaches to improvement remain piecemeal and lack the coherence to make rapid progress on all fronts.

The acting headteacher, supported by some subject leaders, has monitored the work in the boys' books and scrutinised teachers' planning. In addition, some subject leaders are playing a more effective role in monitoring their subjects. In science, for example, the subject leader has successfully spread the use of science investigation throughout the school and monitored its implementation. However, the acting headteacher's programme for checking the quality of teaching is too wide ranging for him alone to fulfil. It has not provided a comprehensive record of the quality of lessons and the areas where improvements are needed. Nevertheless, the checks carried out within the school combined with the monitoring by the local authority have been instrumental in maintaining the improved profile of teaching, increasing the volume and range of work in books and bringing better progress in English and science since the last visit.

The governors have a strong commitment to the school and are increasingly aware of the significant improvements that are needed. However, they are not sufficiently involved in holding the school to account. For example, the outcomes and impact of monitoring activities are not scrutinised or challenged.

The school has made some satisfactory steps forward following a period where progress has been too slow. It is still a long way from meeting the targets set out in the action plan. The leadership remains temporary and the acting headteacher does not have the support of a deputy headteacher. The school has yet to establish the capacity for long term and sustained improvement.

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

- Rigorously monitor the quality of provision, including the planned changes to the curriculum, and evaluate the effectiveness of actions by their impact on pupils' learning and progress – satisfactory

External support

The local authority officer and consultants continue to provide the school with a range of support. A mathematics consultant is now working with the school. Earlier work with the science consultant has helped the school to implement a more investigative approach. Observations of the quality of teaching continue to provide valuable development opportunities for subject leaders when they work alongside consultants.

Priorities for further improvement

No additional priorities added.