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23 July 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 Lynne Kauffman, Additional Inspector, to your school on 14 and 15 July 2008, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the fifth 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 – satisfactory

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – good

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

SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING OF PARDES HOUSE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Report from the fifth monitoring inspection: 14 and 15 July 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, a representative of the governing body and a representative from the local authority.

Context

Since the last visit the teacher of the Year 5 class, who was also the literacy co-ordinator, and the support teacher for pupils with learning difficulties have left the school. The teacher of the Year 3 class has taken the role of supporting the pupils with learning difficulties. Currently the Year 3 and 5 classes are taught by temporary teachers.

Achievement and standards

Although there have been some changes of staff the school has built successfully on the profile of improving progress seen at the last visit.

A comprehensive review of the end-of-year tests and assessments is underway but is incomplete because some are being marked and moderated externally to ensure that all assessments are accurate. However, early indications from internal assessments and national tests show some significant improvements.

Assessments at the end of the Reception year show that standards are in line with, and in some cases exceed, expectations for boys of this age. In communication, language and literacy more boys have reached a good level of development than last year because of the emphasis placed on them learning letters and sounds. At the end of Year 2, results of national tests in reading and writing are likely to be below average. This is the result of changes of staff and undemanding teaching in the past. The school's own tracking shows recent progress made by boys in Year 2 is satisfactory, but far too few of them are working at the higher levels of which they are capable. The position in mathematics is better but standards are still not high enough. Lesson observation shows pupils currently in Year 1 are making good progress.

In Years 3 to 6 some variation in progress remains but improvements are generally being sustained. The improved work and better progress seen, at the last visit in the Year 6 boys' work, have been built on very successfully to produce results in national tests which, although unconfirmed, are well above average in English, mathematics and science.

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

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

Personal development and well-being

The boys are increasingly positive in their attitudes to school and eager to learn. The refurbishment of the main corridor and the good quality work on display now creates an atmosphere and expectation that the boys relish. Coupled with higher expectations of behaviour and attitudes the personal development of the boys is benefiting considerably. However, there are still instances when expectations of good behaviour are not robust enough. These act as a reminder that improvements are not yet fully embedded.

The boys' achievements are increasingly valued and celebrated. In a recent assembly they presented their work from humanities week. One group, dressed as Vikings, confidently shared what they had found out and another group told the school about life in Victorian Times. The boys welcome these new opportunities to celebrate their achievements.

A recent survey of parents' views shows that only a fifth of respondents feel their sons' views are sought, valued or acted upon. Pupils' views have recently been surveyed, but the school council is not being developed sufficiently to extend the boys' involvement in improving the school.

The introduction of daily 'huff and puff' sessions and a range of energetic playground games are adding to the boys better understanding of healthy lifestyles and extending the limited time given to physical education within the secular curriculum.

Quality of provision

The overall profile of the quality of teaching is improving. The subject coordinators have established greater consistency in approaches to planning that is resulting in a better range of tasks for different groups. However, earlier inaccuracies in assessments mean that some work is still not pitched at the right level, particularly for some more able pupils.

Nevertheless, the proportion of good teaching is increasing. In Year 1, for example, the teaching generates the pace and challenge which is helping the boys to make good progress. In Year 3, the boys reacted with great excitement to responses they received to letters they had sent to Jorvik Viking Centre and other museums. The teacher channelled their enthusiasm skilfully and ensured they made rapid progress in their writing. As a result, they displayed considerable pride in their work.

The recent humanities week and the now well established programme of music and art teaching are clear evidence of the broader curriculum now on offer. However, the time allocated to a number of subjects is limited and, consequently, the depth of study is sometimes shallow. The humanities coordinator has developed a programme of history and geography topics and themes which has recently been implemented. As with science, the teachers are now beginning to take opportunities to develop and use literacy and numeracy skills in these subjects. Some early steps are being taken to examine ways of integrating the development of the boys' design and technology skills into the Jewish Studies curriculum.

The school takes appropriate steps to ensure the boys feel safe. Checks are carried out on all teachers, including those provided by agencies for relatively short periods. The academic guidance given to boys is showing signs of greater consistency, and marking is now a focus of monitoring activities. However, variations remain in the way marking is used to help the boys to improve their work.

The school is beginning to seek improved links with parents but six out of ten who responded to a recent survey do not feel the school seeks their views.

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 – good
- Improve the quality of teachers' planning of activities to meet pupils' needs, with appropriate pace and challenge for their differing abilities – good

Leadership and management

The acting headteacher has implemented some significant changes to the school's approach to monitoring and evaluation. These have given far greater coherence to the drive for improvement. A programme for monitoring the quality of lesson planning and teaching, and scrutinising the boys' work, was set out at the beginning of term. The school's intranet is being used well to organise and record many of these activities.

A new integrated school development plan provides very useful direction for improvement activities. It is clear and sets out the priorities in all subjects and areas of the school's work. Progress towards improvement and information gathered from monitoring activities are reviewed at half termly meetings between the acting headteacher and each subject coordinator. The acting headteacher is now generating a faster pace of change because he is setting out what has to improve, how it can be improved and by when the improvement is needed. However, this is a relatively recent development and its impact is yet to be seen in establishing the same good quality of provision for the boys in all year groups.

The governors are now receiving summaries of monitoring activities which not only keep them informed but also enable them to challenge the acting headteacher about the school's performance. The minutes of the most recent governing body meeting show more detailed and robust debate is taking place. Governors now acknowledge the benefit of them being better informed about the school's performance. They also welcomed and enjoyed a presentation given by the numeracy coordinator. A similar presentation by the science coordinator is planned for the next meeting. The increased involvement of governors in holding the school to account, the strengthening subject coordination and the imminent selection of a headteacher are early, but important, steps towards building 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 – good

External support

The local authority has redoubled its efforts to help the school to move forward. The local authority officer's observations of the quality of teaching are now integrated into the school's monitoring programme. Consultants are giving support to the English, mathematics and science coordinators. The numeracy coordinator described the work of the numeracy consultant as 'invaluable' in establishing and implementing an action plan to improve the planning, teaching, learning and assessment in mathematics. The external support the school has received has added considerably to the strengthening subject leadership.

Priorities for further improvement

- Develop stronger links with parents and take account of their views.
- Increase the consistency of marking so that boys are always well informed about what they need to do to improve their work.