

25 September 2008

Mrs M Binns
Bankwood Community Primary School
Bankwood Close
Sheffield
South Yorkshire
S14 1LW

Dear Mrs Binns

**SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF BANKWOOD
COMMUNITY PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Following my visit with Jane Hughes and Andrew Clark, Additional Inspectors, to your school on 23 and 24 September, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures in March 2008. The monitoring inspection report is attached and the main judgements are set out below.

Progress since being subject to special measures is inadequate.

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 Director of Children's Services for Sheffield.

Yours sincerely

Susan Bowles
H M Inspector

SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF BANKWOOD COMMUNITY PRIMARY SCHOOL

Report from the first monitoring inspection: 23 and 24 September 2008

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and spoke with the executive headteacher and deputy headteacher, the school's deputy headteacher and assistant headteacher, groups of pupils, a representative from the local authority (LA) and the chair of the interim executive board.

Context

Since the previous inspection, the school has experienced further instability. The LA has established an interim executive board to govern the school. An executive headteacher and deputy headteacher took up their posts in June, following the departure of a headteacher who had been in post only since January 2008. The executive team had already been supporting the school since October 2007, through a learning partnership between Bankwood and their own school. Bankwood's experienced deputy headteacher has been joined by a new assistant headteacher, who has moved from the partner school. Two teachers left the school in July 2007 and recruitment to replace them is under way. The school's business management is currently provided through the LA.

Achievement and standards

Standards remain very low in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils' progress does not meet the challenging expectations set by the school. Achievement by the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) is lower than is typical. By the end of the EYFS in 2008, only 26% were securely working in the expected range in communication, language and literacy. One advance for the school is that it now has accurate assessment profiles for this age group.

Pupils made poor progress towards their age-related expectations in 2008. National tests taken by seven-year-olds produced very low results. Far fewer pupils reached the higher levels than expected. The school's systems for assessing and tracking progress are applied with varying rigour. Its own analysis of provisional test results for 11-year-olds shows they made insufficient progress between Year 3 and Year 6. On the positive side, standards in reading, writing and mathematics rose in 2008, halting a declining trend. Pupils' rate of progress accelerated in Year 6, although not enough to make up for slower progress in Years 3 to 5. Currently, pupils' work shows that too many, especially boys, have weak writing skills. In EYFS, children's language development is weak and speaking and listening skills are underdeveloped. The exception to this is found where teaching is of a better quality.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in March 2008:

- Raise standards and improve pupils' achievement in English and mathematics – inadequate.

Personal development and well-being

The school has put measures in place to tackle its below average attendance. In doing so, it has drawn on the successful experience of its partnership school. However, the steps taken at Bankwood have not had time to have an impact on pupils' attendance because they have begun to take hold only recently. Furthermore, too many pupils take holidays in term time. Attendance by the end of the year (2007–08) was 90.3%, which is very low compared with the school's target of 93.5% and the national average of 94.8%. Both authorised and unauthorised absences were above average. Attendance currently stands at 92%, still below target, but showing a slight trend of improvement over the first three weeks of the new school year.

Since June, more systematic monitoring and analysis of attendance on a weekly basis has been reviewed regularly by the senior management team. Staff have begun to identify class and individual trends but attendance and punctuality are not mapped against pupils' progress in order to investigate the effect of initiatives, especially on vulnerable pupils. Consequently, the school is not able to demonstrate clearly enough to parents the loss of learning resulting from absences. However, a number of creative ways have been introduced to reduce absences. For example, teacher training days have been aligned with the local secondary school's and certificates and rewards for attendance introduced. Target groups of poor attenders have been identified, liaison with the educational welfare officer is in place, and progress is being tracked. Meanwhile, by backing up the messages given in assembly with a warm welcome at the school entrance from the learning mentor, the school shows signs of having improved pupils' punctuality. Where latecomers were previously arriving up to half an hour late, the last to arrive is now in school five minutes late.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in March 2008:

- Improve pupils' attendance – inadequate.

Quality of provision

The EYFS is no longer inadequate, due to decisive action and good support to improve quality. A new teacher is effectively supported by the EYFS teacher from the partner school and the LA. Planning and assessment are satisfactory. The quality of teaching observed in EYFS is good, with well planned phonic work and systematic development of early literacy skills. Equally well planned mathematical work leads children to enjoy, for example, counting to 10 and beyond. There is a good balance between adult-led and child-selected activities with good systems for children to choose their own task to work at. The EYFS teacher and teaching assistant are skilled in questioning and modelling. The strong thematic approach makes learning relevant and exciting and work has a sense of fun and good pace. Substantial

investment in resources has much improved the environment to a good standard. Displays support learning and celebrate children's work. Some effective use is made of outdoor facilities for learning. All areas of learning are clearly promoted in the well arranged space. Children's skills are low, but the activities challenge them appropriately; for example they practised their physical coordination by filling containers with baby milk powder and moulding letter shapes.

Progress in improving teaching beyond EYFS is patchy. After a slow start, the new school leadership team has worked with determination to improve the quality of teaching, but recognises that inconsistencies remain between classes and age groups. Concerted efforts by the executive headteacher and deputy headteacher have led to a reduction in the proportion of inadequate teaching and the weaker aspects of broadly satisfactory teaching. Even so, few of the lessons observed by inspectors were good and a small proportion were inadequate. Although most lessons were satisfactory, they were not good enough to enable pupils to make the necessary progress to catch up on ground lost in the past.

Examples of effective teaching were peppered throughout the school, but the most consistently effective practice was seen in the EYFS and Years 5 and 6. Here, staff are enthusiastic and set a good challenge for the pupils in their class, whatever their needs. Strengths of the better lessons seen include positive relationships, effective behaviour management, clear planning, good use of questioning and involving pupils in evaluating their progress. Staff are increasingly mindful of the individual needs of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities or who are learning English as an additional language. They differentiate tasks and expectations and work well alongside teaching assistants, and so support pupils' learning effectively.

Several elements contribute to the inadequate and weaker satisfactory lessons. Learning objectives are pitched too high or too low so some pupils struggle to make progress. Although teaching plans are clear, they are not always translated fully into practice. Some teachers do not consolidate skills sufficiently before moving on, so pupils become confused. Sometimes walls and desks are so cluttered with information that pupils do not make good use of it. At times, teachers miss the fact that some pupils are not engaged in activities; occasionally teaching assistants remain passive and do not contribute well enough to the support of pupils. Expectations of pupils' behaviour in lessons are sometimes inconsistent. For example, teachers sometimes allow pupils to call out answers or to talk when they should be listening. Some marking of pupils' work does not provide enough information on how to improve.

More frequent opportunities for training and development are helping staff to develop their professional practice. Accurate assessment and tracking of pupils' progress is developing with clearer systems and growing staff expertise. The links with Norfolk Primary School and the LA allow teachers to spend time with leading professionals in the classroom, and this has been particularly effective in building these teachers' understanding of best practice and confidence. Boys' interests are increasingly reflected in the curriculum. Interactive whiteboards are used regularly by teachers, for example to model and involve pupils in collaborative editing and to focus pupils on their success criteria.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in March 2008:

- Ensure that teaching consistently promotes high standards and meets the learning needs of all pupils – inadequate.

Leadership and management

Significant changes in the school's leadership and management have taken place since the previous inspection but not enough time has elapsed for these changes to make sufficient difference to the quality of education or to standards. The executive headteacher and deputy headteacher have, since taking up their executive posts in June, acted with determination to implement the coherent and realistic improvement plan. Early milestones have been reached. The headteacher reports each week to the interim executive board, which provides robust challenge and relevant expertise. She and the executive deputy have a clear and unflinching understanding of the school's progress in all four areas requiring improvement, based on effective monitoring and evaluation. Their analysis of what needs to be done is credible and based on successful experience in a similar context. Good use has been made of LA support, for example, to moderate judgements. Expertise from the learning partnership school has been well deployed to improve the quality of provision, as improvements in EYFS show. The direction the executive leadership has set is clear and increasingly understood by the wider school leadership team. Management is effective: arrangements to protect children's safety are securely in place and the school is running in an orderly way, something the pupils appreciate. The strategic skills of other senior managers are being developed, for example through coaching in how to analyse and use data. Lines of management have been clarified so all staff know to whom they are accountable. A new assistant headteacher has been well placed to influence the quality of provision in Key Stage 1. Subject leaders for literacy and numeracy have been guided through their first work scrutiny and presented their findings to staff, though they have yet to develop action plans. The programme of professional development emphasises staff responsibility for leadership at all levels and has had a positive effect, although the recommended methods are not yet consistently applied. With considerable external support, the school is functioning smoothly and moving forwards, but it is far from showing the capacity to sustain improvement independently.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in March 2008:

- Secure sustainable and effective leadership – inadequate.

External support

The learning partnership with Norfolk Primary School, brokered by the LA, has had a positive effect on EYFS and in securing the leadership of the school through a difficult period. LA support has contributed, for example, to raising the staff's expectations for pupils, and securing accurate assessment. Additional support provided through the Intensive Support Programme has begun to enable the school to make better use of assessment. The LA is supporting the school in the drive to make appointments which will strengthen the capacity of the school to improve further. The LA Statement of Action has been more fully developed, meets requirements and is having an impact. The Raising Attainment Plan indicates detailed actions and firm milestones for improvement, and the school improvement adviser is

providing constructive challenge and contributing, with others, to monitoring the impact of actions.

Priorities for further improvement

The priorities for further improvement continue to be the issues identified by the last inspection.