

PROTECT - INSPECTION

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Mrs Joan Mitchell, Acting Headteacher
Parkside Junior School
Cokayne Avenue
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Derbyshire
DE6 1EJ

Dear Mrs Mitchell

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Parkside Junior School

Following my visit with Additional Inspectors John Foster and Michael Lafford to your school on 03 and 04 December 2008, 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 May 2008. The monitoring inspection report is attached and the main judgements are set out below.

Progress since being subject to special measures – *satisfactory*

Newly qualified teachers may not be appointed.

This letter and monitoring inspection report will be posted on the Ofsted website.

I am copying this letter and the monitoring inspection report to the Secretary of State, the chair of governors and the Strategic Director of Children and Younger Adults at Derbyshire County Council.

Yours sincerely

Jane Melbourne
H M Inspector

Special measures: monitoring of Parkside Junior School

Report from the first monitoring inspection on 03 – 04 December 2008

Evidence

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

Context

Following the departure of the previous headteacher, there has been an acting headteacher at the school since 24 July 2008. At the end of the summer term, seven members of teaching staff left the school. From this term, a further assistant headteacher and two designate advanced skills teachers (ASTs) have joined the leadership and management team at Parkside Junior. The Chair of the Governing Body has reached the end of her term of office and a new chair will take up post immediately following this monitoring visit. A permanent headteacher has been appointed and will take up the post from the beginning of the spring term 2009.

Achievement and standards

Since the school was inspected the improved quality of teaching has had a positive impact on pupils' achievement and the progress they make. Most pupils in Year 6, for example, have made significant progress during the current term because the teachers have high expectations of their performance and the pupils have reacted positively to these expectations. While this is a similar picture across the school, the better quality teaching is focussed towards the older pupils, and therefore they have made proportionately better progress than some of the younger ones. Standards in English, mathematics and science are broadly average but, based on their previous national test results at the end of Key Stage 1, too few pupils have made sufficient gains in their learning during their time at Parkside Junior. According to school data and unvalidated national data, the percentage of pupils attaining above average scores in the national tests is a little above average in English, but lower than is typical in mathematics and science. The school has undertaken assessment reviews on pupils' attainment and identified areas of specific under-achievement throughout the school. Targets set are realistic and achievable, though too recently introduced to have had any real impact on raising standards across the school.

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

- Ensure the knowledge that teachers have about the levels at which pupils are working is used carefully to plan challenging tasks and promote at least good progress - *satisfactory*

Personal development and well-being

There are excellent relationships between pupils and adults and between the pupils themselves. Since the inspection, there have been a number of successful initiatives to improve the behaviour of the small minority of pupils who disrupted lessons. Inspectors now judge behaviour to be good and often exemplary. Pupils say that they enjoy coming to school and they show this by their cheerful disposition, their attitudes in class and their willingness to talk about their learning. They are making an increasing contribution to the school and the local community. They confidently lead and take part in assemblies and concerts. The school council has been instrumental in helping to improve the school environment and the association with Ashbourne Arts has resulted in active participation in local exhibitions and performances. Pupils enthusiastically help to raise money for charities.

Quality of provision

The quality of teaching and learning has improved since the school was inspected and is now satisfactory. Although more than half the lessons observed during the monitoring visit were judged to be good or better, there remains too some inconsistency across the school. Too much teaching remains satisfactory or, at times, inadequate, to enable the children to make fast enough progress to catch up on lost learning. The best quality teaching has been focussed on enabling the older children, who have the most catching up to do, to achieve well. In these outstanding lessons the teachers' planning is exemplary and clearly identifies what pupils are to learn and how they are to be taught in order for this to happen most effectively. The pace in these lessons is fully appropriate to pupils' learning needs and the excellent relationships that exist between the staff and pupils is conducive to moving learning forward at a fast pace. Too often, however, the pace of other lessons is too slow to enable pupils to make more than satisfactory progress. In some year groups, though not in all, targets are set for pupils, though these are generic rather than specific to the individual pupils' needs. The school has recently reviewed its approach to the daily guided reading sessions for all classes. These lessons are not yet focussed well enough on developing reading skills and so this time is not spent to best effect. Staff continue to monitor the approach to these sessions with a view to raising standards.

The curriculum is satisfactory. There have been some improvements since the inspection which ensure that activities in lessons are more carefully matched to pupils' abilities and needs. This means that more pupils are making at least satisfactory progress. Provision in information and communication technology has been enhanced by vastly improved facilities and enriched by the increased use of computer skills across the subjects. There is a good range of after school clubs, which are popular with pupils.

The school complies fully with latest government requirements for safeguarding and protecting children. There are robust systems in place to ensure that pupils learn and play in a healthy and safe environment. The school has made great strides in

providing more effective communication with parents and carers. Parents now find teachers and managers more accessible and are better informed about the school's plans and their children's progress. They are becoming more involved in the work of the school. As a result of the new behaviour policy and staff training in 'positive play', expectations of behaviour have risen to a consistently high level. More rigorous tracking systems have enabled teachers to accurately assess pupils' progress, but the setting of individual targets is at an early stage of development. Significant strides have been made in accurately marking pupils' work, including providing advice to pupils for further improvement. This, however, is not yet totally consistent across the school, nor does it combine with strategies to improve spelling and presentation. Support for pupils with particular needs is now more refined and staff are therefore better equipped to give them more focused and targeted help.

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

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning in order to quicken progress and to raise standards in English, maths and science – *satisfactory*
- Strengthen the relationships between home and school, by making sure that the school communicates regularly with parents about their children's education – *good*

Leadership and management

Immediately following the last inspection, the school underwent some significant changes, creating instability at a management and class teacher level. The acting headteacher has made a significant contribution to strengthening the staff team, working towards sustainability and long-term improvement. All teaching vacancies were filled, bringing in new leadership and expertise. The school has a new direction with a renewed vision, which is also shared by the governing body. All of the changes, coupled with the drive and determination of all concerned, have contributed to the satisfactory progress made since the last inspection. There has been a whole school focus on the senior team effectively leading the school, and to improving the quality of teaching and learning for the pupils in order to raise attainment. Pupils' progress is tracked more accurately and, equally importantly, staff are now better using this information to make the necessary changes in educating the pupils and to identify where to channel their energies. For example, a close analysis of English revealed a whole school issue of standards in reading being below that of writing.

Class teachers and their assistants have been receptive to change and have improved their practices as a result of good quality input from the local authority advisors and consultants and other external partners such as best practice coaches. The acting headteacher and representatives of the local authority have carefully monitored the impact of this. There is more thorough monitoring of planning and pupils' work, which is moderated to ensure consistency of practice and to check on the accuracy of levelling. The impact of better teaching and learning is seen in the accelerated rates of pupil progress in lessons and over time in some year groups.

Pupils are achieving well now overall and the school has made good progress in communicating this to parents.

The governing body has an excellent range of relevant expertise, which is being put to good use. It has reconsidered its committee structure and sensibly formed a subgroup which focuses on the points for improvement from the last inspection. This has improved the effectiveness of the governing body's role in monitoring and evaluating the school and more effectively holding the school to account. The governing body takes its responsibilities seriously and it has its own appropriate action plan with suitable priorities. The outgoing chair has worked hard to ensure her successor is effectively supported into the role. There is an accurate evaluation of the school's strengths and weaknesses in the self evaluation form, which has been recently updated. The leadership team and governors, working very closely with representatives from the local authority, have identified where improvement needs to be sustained and embedded, and further areas for immediate development. Many strategies for improvement are now in place. The school is currently working through its improvement plan well and all staff are committed to its implementation.

Measures taken so far are making a difference and there is some good and outstanding practice across the school to disseminate. Subject co-ordinators, many newly appointed to their roles, have made an impressive start in leading and monitoring their subject areas. The fabric of the building has significantly improved. Major repair and refurbishment took place during the summer holidays. The space inside the school is better utilised and the learning environment has been upgraded. Pupils, parents and staff acknowledge the benefits of these improvements and the difference this is making to pupils' attitudes and achievement. The displays around the school celebrate much good quality work and the working walls in each classroom ensure that pupils have important learning tools at their disposal. The classrooms are well ordered, clean and more spacious due to re-organisation and a reduction in the number of pupils in each class.

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

- Make sure that leaders at all levels establish and rigorously apply effective systems for monitoring the school's work and evaluating improvements, in order to strengthen the performance of the school – *satisfactory*

External support

The quality of the external support provided by the local authority, and the School Improvement Partner and Senior Advisor in particular, has been of high quality. Those responsible realised that the school needed a very carefully planned and swiftly executed programme of additional support. The local authority has made a major financial contribution to improving the school. This has ensured that class sizes are reduced in the short term, that the school has adequate good quality staffing and that staff and pupils have access to the necessary ICT to facilitate teaching and learning. The local authority successfully appointed the temporary acting headteacher and more recently has helped to secure a substantive permanent

headteacher. Representatives from the local authority have worked with staff to improve leadership, teaching and governance practice and have helped the school to identify the necessary actions to bring about change in the key areas for improvement. The local authority statement of action is extensive and detailed. It shows how it will support each of the identified areas requiring improvement and its impact so far has been good, contributing to the school's satisfactory progress. While training has been well received by school staff and governors, the local authority realises that further professional development is still needed to ensure consistency of provision across the school and to further build on the existing good practice already taking place.

Priorities for further improvement - As at the last section 5 inspection, except that:

- (Point for improvement 2) The school should give more emphasis to sharing individual targets with pupils and parents in order to raise standards, and the focus on English should give significant account to reading
- (Point for improvement 4) The regular communication with parents should be maintained now that some encouraging developments in this area have been implemented.