

Prospects Learning Services Ltd
Prospects House
19 Elmfield Road
Bromley, Kent
BR1 1LT

T 08456 40 40 40
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk

Direct T 020 8315 1250
Direct F 020 8315 1279
Jackie.Krafft@ofsted.gov.uk



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Ms Miranda Flack
Headteacher
Eastcote Primary School
Eastcote Road
Welling
DA16 2ST

Dear Ms Flack

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Eastcote Primary School

Following my visit with Pauline Berry, additional inspector, to your school on 30 June and 1 July 2009, 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 September 2007. 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 – satisfactory

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 Director of Education for Bexley.

Yours sincerely

Jacqueline Krafft
Her Majesty's Inspector

Special measures: monitoring of Eastcote Primary School

Report from the fifth monitoring inspection on 30 June and 1 July 2009

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work; scrutinised documents; and met with the headteacher, senior and subject leaders, groups of pupils, the chair of the governing body, the School Improvement Partner and the deputy director of the local authority.

Context

The leading mathematics teacher, who joined the staff in January, has been appointed as one of two assistant headteachers. She has responsibility for science during the maternity leave of the post-holder, whose Year 2 class is being taught by a temporary teacher. The second assistant headteacher has been appointed and will take up post in September, but has been spending some time in school this term. Year 3 is being taught by two temporary teachers. This class is divided into two smaller groups for English, mathematics and science lessons. The school continues to have a deficit budget but the size of this deficit is decreasing. Major rebuilding work is underway. The school is scheduled to relocate to the building next term.

Achievement and standards

Achievement at the end of Year 6 has improved this year in mathematics and science. A greater proportion of pupils have made at least the expected two levels of progress from the end of Year 2, compared to the previous year. However, targets have been missed, particularly in English, where writing remains a concern. The targets set for pupils to attain the highest levels in English, mathematics and science were also missed. This is because the level of challenge provided for the most able pupils is not consistent. In other year groups, the school's tracking information and work seen in pupils' books and in lessons show that, although the progress pupils are making is improving and there is no significant difference between boys and girls, there are inconsistencies between subjects and classes. For example, pupils enjoy science, have good opportunities for investigative work and make better progress in this subject. They also make more rapid progress in Years 5 and 6. However, progress in writing in Key Stages 1 and 2 is limited by too few opportunities for pupils to write at length. In addition, progress in mathematics is slower in Years 2 to 4 compared to other year groups. Overall, the rate of progress pupils make varies because staffing instability has resulted in inconsistencies in the quality of teaching. Appropriate action is being taken by senior leaders to address this.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- raise achievement in science and mathematics in Years 3 to 6 and writing in Years 1 and 2, particularly for girls – satisfactory

Personal development and well-being

Pupils say they enjoy coming to school and attend regularly. They say that teachers help them, not just in terms of improving their work but also to sort out issues with regard to friendships and bullying. One pupil felt that the school was 'cosy' and 'everyone knows everyone else'. Pupils talk with confidence about their targets. They say that they know when they've achieved them and are given guidance on what they need to do to move to the next level. Older pupils are given the opportunity to reflect upon their learning and to engage in meaningful dialogue with their teachers through written comments and feedback in order to bring about improvements. There are a range of reward systems in place to encourage pupils to make the right choices and to work hard. Pupils are aware of the need for healthy eating and this starts in the Nursery, where healthy snacks and water are available at all times.

Quality of provision

The quality of teaching is improving. Lesson objectives and guidance on how pupils can measure their success are shared routinely. Interactive whiteboards and a good range of practical resources help to engage pupils and contribute to their enjoyment of lessons, particularly in science. Teaching assistants are used increasingly well to support pupils in class and have developed sharper questioning skills to move learning on. The use of feedback to help pupils take the next steps in their learning is also improving, particularly in Years 5 and 6. However, in other year groups, opportunities vary for pupils to respond to teachers' marking by reflecting on their learning. The expectations of what pupils can achieve in a lesson are not consistently challenging. For example, some pupils in Year 3 and 4 have too many pieces of unfinished or poorly presented work. The development of pupils' skills to become independent writers is limited by an over-reliance on worksheets for the younger pupils, and opportunities for pupils to use their literacy skills in other subjects is underdeveloped, which slows their achievement in writing.

In the Nursery and Reception classes, there is an appropriate range of adult-led and child-initiated activities which engage and motivate children. However, their freedom to move between indoor and outdoor provision is limited. The assessment of children's knowledge, skills and understanding when they start in the Early Years Foundation Stage is not yet robust enough to provide a secure baseline against which to measure the progress they make by the end of the key stage.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- improve the quality of teaching in Years 1 to 6, including by sharing good practice – satisfactory
- improve the use of assessment information to plan work that challenges all pupils – satisfactory

Leadership and management

The headteacher has a clear strategy for improvement and is building a strong senior leadership team to support this. It has remained focused on the job in hand and not been distracted, for example, by the building work. Senior leaders know their school well, have an honest understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in teaching and learning, and act as positive role models. This is underpinned by the detailed analysis of systematic tracking and monitoring information to identify where support and intervention are needed. The programme of coaching and mentoring staff to help them improve is having an impact on raising achievement and improving the quality of lessons, particularly in mathematics and science, but is not as strong in English. Responsibility for ensuring that the needs of all pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, is shared. A member of the senior leadership team has responsibility for tracking and analysing data and ensuring that appropriate support is put in place to address underachievement. Support varies according to the needs of pupils and is monitored for its impact. However, a planned approach to meet the needs of the increasing number of learners who speak English as an additional language is not yet in place. Subject leaders are continuing to develop their leadership skills appropriately but their ability to evaluate the quality of lessons accurately is not yet consistent. This is because some evaluations focus on what teachers do rather than on the quality of learning that takes place. Governors recognise how far the school has come since the previous inspection and understand that more still needs to be done to address the legacy of underachievement and to secure sustained improvement. They seek information from a variety of sources and use this appropriately to challenge leaders and hold them to account.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- involve managers at all levels in improving teaching and learning and raising achievement – satisfactory

External support

The associate headteacher has provided good induction and mentoring for the new assistant headteacher to ensure a smooth transition to the new leadership arrangements when her support is withdrawn at the end of the term. The external support provided by the local authority has been reduced as the leadership capacity in the school grows. The headteacher is now determining when and where additional support is to be targeted, for example in using the skills of a teacher provided by London Challenge to address the remaining inconsistencies in the quality of teaching and learning.