

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
Robin.Hammerton@ofsted.gov.uk



13 July 2009

Mrs Margaret Windsor
Acting Headteacher
Townsend Primary School
Townsend Street
London
SE17 1HJ

Dear Mrs Windsor

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Townsend Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 7 and 8 July 2009, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to confirm the inspection findings.

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

Progress since being subject to special measures – good

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – outstanding

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 Children's Services for Southwark.

Yours sincerely

Robin Hammerton
Her Majesty's Inspector

Special measures: monitoring of Townsend Primary School

Report from the second monitoring inspection on 7 and 8 July 2009

Evidence

HMI observed the school's work, attended the school's project group convened by the local authority, scrutinised documents and met with the acting headteacher, several staff, pupils, the chair of governors and senior representatives from the local authority.

Context

Staffing in the school has remained stable since the last monitoring inspection. A new leader for the Early Years Foundation Stage has been appointed to start work in September. The substantive headteacher remains on long-term leave. The school continues to be led by an acting headteacher from the staff of the local authority.

Achievement and standards

In the Early Years Foundation Stage, children learn well in an attractive and structured environment, and are making good progress, as at the last inspection. Moderated data from assessments from the Reception Year in 2009 show that pupils have attained at least in line with national expectations in most areas and above expectations in many, including social development, reading, writing and physical development.

Recent national assessments at Year 2 show the improvements the school had anticipated compared to the previous year. All pupils reached the expected level in mathematics, and most also did so in reading and writing. However, results in writing were weaker than in other areas.

The school's own assessment data, which are accurate and well organised, show that pupils' progress is now much better throughout Key Stage 2. Where there has been underachievement, it is being made up for. Nevertheless, the unvalidated Year 6 national test results and teacher assessments continue to show some long-term residual underachievement in this year group. However, the pupils concerned have made rapid, improving and enjoyable progress during most of this year and, in this sense, move on to secondary education well prepared and on a high note.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- raise standards in English, mathematics and science, particularly in Key Stage 2, and make sure that pupils of all abilities reach their potential – good

Personal development and well-being

Pupils continue to enjoy coming to school. They are proud of it and can discuss, knowledgeably and happily, how it is improving for them, showing respect for each other's views. It is a real community. Pupils are very friendly and pleased to welcome visitors, to help each other and to work together. They are well behaved at play-times, around the school and in lessons, with the playground a hive of enjoyable and safe activity. They do, however, still report occasional instances of name calling and aggressive play, which they say the school deals with well when it occurs. Year 5 pupils are enjoying their training to become peer mediators. In lessons and assemblies, pupils listen and participate actively with interest, which helps their improving progress. Their singing has improved impressively, as the school has worked successfully on this. This adds much to pupils' enjoyment of school life and their sense of togetherness, as well as providing opportunities for reflection.

Quality of provision

The improvements noted in the quality of teaching at the last monitoring inspection have continued very well. Training and coaching for staff have continued but, most importantly, staff work and learn closely together, discussing and further improving their practice through mutual support. Lessons are well structured and paced. Teachers explain clearly to the pupils what is to be learned and how they can be successful. Expectations of what pupils can achieve are rising and pupils are responding well to this, showing keenness to learn and to reach their targets. Teaching assistants' work is becoming increasingly well focused and effective in promoting faster progress. Work is increasingly well matched to pupils' differing needs, using the improved assessment data specifically and effectively to guide this.

The curriculum has been vastly improved, to notable effect, in a very short time. During this term, pupils across the school have enjoyed well-organised projects about places, involving many subjects. Some year groups studied the local area, others places far away, such as parts of the Caribbean or Africa. These projects have galvanised the enthusiasm and excitement of pupils and staff, helping to create better conditions for higher achievement. Stimulating displays of this work encourage pupils. Staff have been very thoughtful in their work together on curriculum development, considering and trying out different ideas carefully and forming future plans. They know there is a long way to go before the school has a whole broad curriculum, with the full rigour they are looking for in every subject, but they have made a great start.

There have also been significant improvements in particular subjects, notably music, which now has a much higher profile in lessons and across the school. Many pupils enjoy African drumming workshops, playing to a high standard. The school garden, for which pupils take much responsibility, is very attractive and supports learning well. The new leader for the Early Years Foundation Stage has led helpful introductory sessions for parents of nursery-age children, indicating useful

partnership arrangements. The school plans to introduce modern foreign language teaching next year.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- improve teaching, particularly at Key Stage 2, ensuring that all teachers know how to use assessment information to plan learning and guide pupils to their next steps to be achieved – good
- improve, over time, the breadth and depth of the whole-school curriculum, so that it is more exciting and challenging, with clear progression in skills and knowledge, and contributes more to raising standards – outstanding in its impact at this early stage; there is still much more to do in the longer term.

Leadership and management

The clear progress being made by the school has been made possible by the strong and experienced leadership of the acting headteacher. She continues to be well supported by the deputy headteacher. The acting headteacher saw from the outset the potential and enthusiasm of the staff and continues to help them to unlock it. Planning and self-evaluation systems are well organised and effective in promoting improvement. The recently introduced system to track pupils' progress means that staff know clearly how every individual is progressing and also that every teacher is accountable for how well their classes do. This level of rigour is new to the staff but, to everyone's credit, they have not seen it as a threat but as an opportunity to work together and to show what they can do in a supportive environment. They care very much for each individual pupil and do not want to see anyone fall behind. The next challenge for the school is to see these improvements sustained and grown into the next academic year.

The work of the senior leadership team continues to develop very well, with very noticeable positive impact. Its members now take an overview of, and increasing responsibility for, the work of the whole school, supporting, monitoring and guiding staff readily and effectively. Their professional development is well managed. There is a fast-growing level of rigour in their work, applied with much positive energy. This is a huge improvement since the inspection and has helped ensure the improvements and much greater consistency in practice across the school. The school has taken back responsibility for the mathematics curriculum from a local authority consultant, as the coordinator for the subject has returned from leave. She has adapted to the changed circumstances well and is making a very useful contribution. The weaknesses in curriculum leadership identified at the last monitoring inspection have begun to be addressed effectively. Staff with subject responsibilities are assuming greater responsibility for leading and setting the standards for their subjects, a process which the school knows needs to continue in order to achieve the new curriculum it is aiming for.

The governing body has improved its work very well. It is close to being full and is suitably organised. The chair is spirited and very committed, seeing what needs to

be done and what is important for the school. Members have continued to learn about governors' responsibilities and how to evaluate the school's success, through training events and practical experience. They then apply this learning quickly and usefully. As a result, they both support the school and hold it to account much better. The governing body is well aware of how important it is to arrange the long-term leadership of the school as soon as is reasonably possible. It is working closely with the local authority on this.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- develop the skills of the leadership team to monitor the work of the school with rigour, aiming for consistency of practice and utilising the good practice already in place – outstanding
- strengthen governance, particularly in monitoring the school's work more systematically so that governors can hold the school to account – good

External support

The local authority gives very good support, most importantly, through the provision of the acting headteacher, and through other consultancy support, which continues to help build the school's internal capacity so that it will be ready to move on more independently when the long-term future leadership of the school is settled. It is supporting the governing body in securing this. The lead officer continues to provide useful advice. The School Improvement Partner ensures that his work adds to, rather than duplicates, that of others. Challenge and support for the school are provided and coordinated well through the efficiently organised local authority project board, which pursues all pertinent matters rigorously. City Challenge also continues to provide support to the school through the provision of suggestions and resources.

Priority for further improvement

- Ensure that arrangements for the school's long-term headship are made at the earliest opportunity