

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
Asyia.Kazmi@ofsted.gov.uk



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Miss Sarah Rhodes
Headteacher
Leopold Street
Bow
London
E3 4LA

Dear Miss Rhodes

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 17 June 2009, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during my visit. Please extend my thanks to the pupils who spoke to me and the representative from the local authority.

Since the previous inspection, two teachers have left the school and three teachers are due to leave at the end of this academic year. The school has been successful in recruiting teachers to ensure a full complement of staff from September. The senior leadership team, although relatively new, works as a cohesive team.

As a result of the inspection on 5 and 6 June 2008, the school was asked to:

- improve the quality of teaching in order to raise standards and ensure that all pupils make good progress
- use marking and assessments more effectively to plan appropriately challenging tasks for all pupils and to make sure that pupils understand what they need to do next to improve their work and attainment
- work together with parents and pupils to promote regular attendance and good punctuality.

Having considered all the evidence, I am of the opinion that at this time the school is making satisfactory progress in addressing the issues for improvement.

Children join the school with knowledge, skills and understanding below those normally expected for their age group. In 2008, by the end of Key Stage 1, the standards they reached remained below average, except in reading where they were average. Standards by the end of Year 6, although improved, were well below average in mathematics and were average in science. Standards in English declined substantially and were well below average, particularly in writing. Last year,

although pupils made better progress in Year 6, their overall progress in English and in mathematics was inadequate given their starting points.

Children make good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 and are reaching standards close to the national average. In Year 1, pupils demonstrated good speaking and listening skills and confidently linked their prior learning in other subjects to their literacy topic. Staff in the Early Years Foundation Stage are effective in developing children's language skills and guiding their learning. As a result, children are able to work on their own, demonstrating concentration, as well as with each other.

Senior leaders have detailed knowledge of the progress pupils are making. Current school data indicate that attainment is set to rise in Year 6, although it remains below average in English and mathematics. In Key Stage 2 the progress pupils make in lessons varies from good to satisfactory. Lessons, on the whole, are calm, work-focused environments and the relationship between pupils and staff is good. Most of the teachers are effective in ensuring that pupils are prepared for learning and that their behaviour is good. Nevertheless, in Years 3 and 4 pupils' behaviour sometimes declines, which hinders their learning. Senior leaders are addressing this. Teachers' planning is well structured and matches the needs of most pupils. However, higher-attaining pupils are not always sufficiently challenged and teachers are not fully skilled in ensuring that teaching stretches these pupils and develops their independent learning skills. Many additional adults provide good support to pupils through skilled questioning and effective strategies to keep pupils on task. However, there are a few pupils whose behaviour when working with additional adults is unsatisfactory.

Senior leaders, acting as phase and subject leaders, have established a strong model to support the development of planning and teaching across the school. Regular meetings with their phase teams and, where appropriate, one-to-one meetings with teachers have enabled senior leaders to moderate teachers' planning, marking and assessment. They have invested time in coaching teachers in order to improve their practice, through joint planning, team teaching and, subsequently, observing to identify strengths and areas for development. As a result of this support, teaching has improved across the school. Nevertheless, inconsistencies still remain. For example, in mathematics there is sometimes a lack of challenge to ensure pupils develop their mental arithmetic skills. In addition, work for pupils is sometimes repetitive rather than focused on developing new skills. On occasions, lessons are over-led by teachers, which limits opportunities for pupils to show skills they already have and they become bored. In other lessons, teachers have very high expectations and pupils clearly rise to meet them. Examples of effective learning included pupils giving accurate and constructive feedback to their peers in order to improve their drama presentations.

Senior leaders have put in place strong assessment procedures which involve termly assessments of pupils' work across a range of subjects. Teachers' assessment is moderated by phase leaders and then discussed in detail with individual class

teachers and teaching assistant. This dialogue enables senior leaders and teachers to have a good overview of the strengths and weaknesses in pupils' learning, to identify if teachers need support and to put in place intervention for pupils. This informs specific learning targets for pupils who are fully aware of them. They report that teachers work with them in helping to meet their targets, which can include support after school. A less developed aspect of this assessment process is the robust use of data to inform teachers' planning which means that not all groups are fully challenged in lessons.

Analysis of progress for groups of pupils is also undertaken, which enables senior leaders to identify patterns of underachievement. They recognise that the standards reached by White British boys is lower than that of their peers and they have instigated actions to redress this, including teaching which is more interactive.

The marking policy has been revised. However, teachers' marking is inconsistent and varies from clear formative guidance on how pupils can improve to ticks or smiley faces, which do not provide pupils with sufficient advice on how to improve. Furthermore, it is not always clear how pupils act on the helpful advice when it is given by teachers.

Attendance has improved since the last inspection. The school has appointed a parent support worker to work with families to improve attendance. Senior leaders are able to cite examples of individual children whose attendance has improved with support. However, a strong, robust whole-school strategy to raise attendance, which also involves class teachers, is not yet in place.

Senior leaders are positive about the good support provided by the local authority. The School Improvement Partner is very well informed about the work of the school and the impact of the actions taken. Termly meetings involving the school, local authority and governors have ensured the school is held to account. Additional support has been provided by consultants, as well as by senior leaders from other schools. A strategic approach to ensure the sustainability of actions taken has meant that the local authority has planned for and is able to reduce the intensity of its support, thereby developing the capacity of senior leaders to promote improvement.

I hope that you have found the visit helpful in promoting improvement in your school. This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Asyia Kazmi
Her Majesty's Inspector