



19 July 2005

Mr J D Savage
Headteacher
Church Hill School
Burlington Rise
East Barnet
Hertfordshire
EN4 8NN

Dear Mr Savage

Implementation of Church Hill School's Action Plan

Following my visit to your school on 6 and 7 July 2005, I write to confirm the findings and to notify you of the outcomes.

As you know, the inspection was part of a policy involving a broader series of visits by HMI and Additional Inspectors to check on the development and improvement of schools where the section 10 inspection indicated that the school was underachieving. You will recall that the aims of the visit were to assess the progress made in addressing and eliminating underachievement and meeting the targets given in the action plan. I also evaluated standards of achievement and the quality of education, especially in relation to areas of underachievement.

During the visit I inspected nine lessons or part lessons; attended a registration period and an assembly; scrutinised a wide range of documentation provided by the school; and held discussions with yourself, nominated staff, the chair of governors and a representative of the LEA on the causes and areas of underachievement. I also examined a range of the pupils' work and spoke informally with other staff and pupils.

On the basis of the evidence gathered during the visit, I made the following observations to you, the chair of governors and a representative of the LEA.

The school's post-inspection action plan is satisfactory; it addresses each of the areas for improvement from inspection and identifies a range of appropriate actions. The section concerned with the fourth issue, extending the role of the subject leaders, is brief and does not show clearly what professional development arrangements will be needed to ensure that the monitoring of the provision by the co-ordinators is both rigorous and internally consistent. The plan identifies success

criteria, most of which are appropriately focused and measurable, and lead personnel and timescales are specified in relation to each action.

Attainment in the Key Stage 1 national tests in 2004 was below national figures in reading and writing but well above in mathematics. Standards were well below those of schools in similar socio-economic contexts in reading and writing but above in mathematics. At Key Stage 2, the school's performance was in line with that of schools nationally in English and above in mathematics and science. However, attainment was lower than the average for similar schools in English and mathematics although broadly in line in science. The pupils' achievement in the 2004 Key Stage 2 tests was below that of schools nationally in which the pupils had similar prior attainment.

The unvalidated results of the 2005 national tests indicate that the proportions of the pupils achieving the age expected Level 4 or above in each subject were similar to those of 2004, although there was a slight rise in mathematics. Attainment at the higher Level 5 declined in English and mathematics, although it rose slightly in science. If the results are confirmed, the school's performance will fall short of the targets in the action plan and significantly so in the proportions of pupils achieving Level 5 or above in English and mathematics. The school's analysis of these results in the light of Fischer Family Trust data indicates that the progress of pupils in the middle and lower attainment range was broadly in line with expectations; that of the pupils with potential for higher attainment was relatively weaker.

At Key Stage 1, the unvalidated results indicate that the school's targets for achievement at the age expected Level 2b or above were exceeded in reading and mathematics and narrowly missed in writing. However, the proportions of pupils reaching the higher grade 3 were below the school's targets for each of the tests.

The school has made reasonable progress in the development of common approaches to assessment. The staff have access to the pupil tracking system supplied by the LEA, enabling them to identify readily those individual pupils whose progress is above, in line with, or below, expectations based on prior attainment. The school carries out analyses of the results of the national tests, as well as of the non-statutory tests taken by pupils, to identify and address weaker aspects of the pupils' performance. This work is now in progress as this summer's assessment data has become available. Systems are therefore in place to ensure that the teachers have access to an appropriate range of assessment information, but the use of this information in planning to meet the pupils' differing learning needs is not consistent across the school. The quality of marking is at best very good and includes the use of formative comments to enable the pupils to improve their future work. In some books, however, the marking was cursory and ignored important errors in literacy.

In lessons, the pupils' attainment was generally in line with and sometimes above national age-related expectations. Their progress was at least satisfactory in all but one of the lessons and in three, it was good or very good. Most pupils showed a

satisfactory or good range of learning skills for their ages. They were able to collaborate productively and to work independently for reasonable periods. They showed interest in their work and often made extended contributions to discussions, sometimes exploring ideas and opinions as well as offering factual answers. Overall, however, the progress of the pupils in the middle and lower attaining ranges was better than that of the higher attainers. The tasks and resources were not always well matched to the needs of the most able and this was especially so in subjects other than literacy and numeracy.

In all the lessons, the pupils' personal development was good or very good. Most pupils were attentive and co-operative; they greeted the visitor courteously and they were ready to talk openly and confidently about the work they were doing. The youngest children showed a good range of social skills for their ages. At breaks, most pupils moved around the site in a sensible and mature way, showing consideration for adults and peers alike. Attendance is satisfactory. In the Key Stage 2 assembly, the pupils were engaged and attentive, participating confidently in a positive occasion which celebrated their achievements and gave them opportunities for reflection on experiences relevant to their own lives.

In eight of the lessons, the teaching was at least satisfactory and in a third it was good or very good. In the best lessons, the planning identified tasks and resources matched to the pupils' differing needs and attainment. There was efficient organisation of time and resources and due weight was given to the plenary session at the lesson end. The teachers had good presentational skills and made effective use of resources, including the interactive whiteboards. Questioning was frequent and open, expecting extended answers and targeting the diffident individuals to ensure that they engaged fully with whole-class oral work. Learning support assistants were well deployed in these successful lessons. Behaviour was well managed and relationships between pupils and adults were mutually polite and respectful. The teachers' subject knowledge was generally secure.

There were some weaknesses in the teaching, including some in the lessons which were satisfactory overall. In some lesson plans, learning objectives were confused with the tasks which were planned. The common lesson planning form prompts the identification of the teachers' activities in one column and those of the pupils in another. It does not, however, require staff to show what it is that the pupils are expected learn as a result of carrying out the tasks. Therefore, while lesson plans routinely identified three levels of learning outcomes for pupils of differing attainment, they did not consistently show how the pupils would reach them; this was an issue in each of the key stages. The time at the ends of lessons was not always well used to review and consolidate key learning points and to check the understanding of all the pupils. In some cases, the time was used mainly for the pupils to share the work they had done and in two instances, one or more pupils were not involved in the closing plenary. The teachers' questioning was very good at best but in some lessons, answers were usually taken from volunteers so that the less confident pupils opted out of discussion and opportunities to assess their understanding were missed.

The school has made good progress in planning for the teaching of literacy and numeracy in subjects other than mathematics and English. A helpful curriculum map has been formulated to show clearly the points in schemes of work which provide opportunities for the teaching of skills in numeracy and language. In the course of this inspection, good practice was seen in the development of mathematical understanding in science and in the teaching of writing through history.

Changes have been made to the timetable for the next academic year to ensure that full hours will be available for teaching lessons in literacy and numeracy in the mornings. Steps have already been taken to provide greater flexibility for the Foundation Stage.

The leadership and management of the school are satisfactory overall. At the beginning of the present calendar year, the school carried out a review of its own performance and judged its overall effectiveness to be sound, while recognising that there was room for improvement in some aspects of its provision. This remains a realistic evaluation. A school improvement plan has been written to build upon and supersede the post-inspection action plan. The new plan makes appropriate reference to the issues identified by inspection and shows how the work begun during the first year after the inspection will be taken forward. There are systematic and clearly programmed arrangements for the monitoring of the teaching and learning by means of a suitable range of methods. The role of the deputy headteacher is well developed but that of the subject co-ordinators is in need of further growth. They make use of an appropriate range of strategies to monitor work in their areas. However, there is some variation in the rigour with which they approach the evaluation of the provision and their use of performance data is not yet fully developed. The governors have become more proactive in their strategic role and in holding the school to account for its performance. The minutes of their meetings indicate that they are concerned with improvements in the pupils' progress as a matter of priority.

The LEA has provided a good level of support for the school. Officers have monitored the quality of the provision rigorously and have provided clear feedback for staff on the strengths and weaknesses in the teaching and learning. They have also provided advice and guidance, through training and through direct involvement in the classroom including the modelling of lessons.

The school is making reasonable progress towards raising pupils' attainment and eliminating underachievement.

In relation to the action plan and the impact of the actions taken, reasonable progress has been made in addressing the key tasks which relate to the school's underachievement.

The school should:

- take further measures to monitor and improve the achievement of the higher attaining pupils;
- develop further the monitoring role of the subject co-ordinators;
- continue to develop the quality of the teaching so that more of it is good or better.

I am copying this letter to the chair of governors and the local education authority. This letter will also be posted on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Caroline Bolton
HM Inspector of Schools

cc chair of governors
Barnet LEA