

12 April 2007

Mr Sean Lawlor  
The Executive Headteacher  
Pardes House Primary School  
Hendon Lane  
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Dear Mr Lawlor

## SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF PARDES HOUSE PRIMARY SCHOOL

### Introduction

Following my visit with Kay Charlton, Additional Inspector, to your school on 21 and 22 March 2007, 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 October 2006.

This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website. Please inform the Regional Inspection Service Provider of any factual inaccuracies within 24 hours of the receipt of this letter.

### Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and pupils' work and met with the executive headteacher and associate headteacher, the school council, chair of the governing body, science subject leader and a representative of the local authority (LA).

### Context

Since the school was inspected in October 2006 there have been changes to the teaching staff. One teacher has left and another is on long term sick leave. Currently, three classes are taught by temporary teachers. The post of headteacher was advertised in January 2006 but no appointment was made. The post has been re-advertised. The school day is now longer to provide more time for the secular curriculum.

## Achievement and standards

Over the last few years the boys have made too little progress and standards have been too low. There are indications that changes of staff and the steps taken by the school are beginning to bring about some improvement in progress in lessons. Improved tracking of the boys' performance shows the proportion assessed to be meeting the targets set in the action plan is somewhat short of the challenge the school has been set, especially in writing. Nevertheless, more boys are now making adequate progress but they are still not achieving as well as they should.

Writing and science work indicates that the boys are making better progress but the legacy of significant underachievement has yet to be overcome. The basic skills of handwriting, spelling and punctuation are not yet well established. In science, the boys are now planning investigations but many have gaps in their scientific knowledge and the skills of recording observations and drawing conclusions. A reasonable start has been made to improve achievement but standards remain too low.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in October 2006:

- Raise pupils' achievement, particularly in writing and science – satisfactory progress

## Personal development and well-being

Although behaviour in lessons remains satisfactory there are occasions where the boys do not settle quickly enough to the tasks they are set or show respect for resources provided by their teachers. Sometimes movement around the school is too boisterous and some boys do not take enough care of their belongings. Expectations of behaviour around the school are inconsistent.

There are improvements in the boys' enjoyment of learning. They say that this is because they now have more opportunities to take part in practical lessons such as art and design and technology. They also say that the use of the interactive whiteboards makes lessons more interesting. The boys are aware of the importance of a healthy lifestyle but opportunities for physical education are still limited by the amount of time available within the secular curriculum. The school council provides an opportunity for boys to voice their views and they are proud of the work they have undertaken in encouraging others to be more litter conscious.

## Quality of provision

Teaching and learning in Years 3 to 6 have been the focus for improvement. Rigorous monitoring carried by LA officers provides the senior leadership team with an accurate view of the strengths and weaknesses of the teaching. The information gleaned from these activities has been used to determine the focus for support. As a result the quality of teaching has improved. Of the ten lessons seen eight were

judged to be satisfactory and two were good. In the good lessons the teachers engaged the boys in interesting tasks and successfully questioned them to encourage them to think more deeply.

The associate headteacher and an advanced skills teacher are working with the school to improve the quality of teaching and learning. They have helped the teachers to make better use of information from assessment and marking to plan lessons. This has resulted in appropriate tasks with a clear purpose now being planned but in practice the needs of different ability groups are still not catered for well enough. Tracking of progress now provides a picture of each boy's performance allowing the teachers to identify those who need additional support. The boys now have targets in English, mathematics and science, so that they know what they need to do to make progress. These developments provide the foundations for improvements in teaching and learning but they are yet to have a marked impact on progress.

Curriculum planning has improved and a wider range of subjects is now being taught. The boys value the broader range of opportunities they are now being offered. On occasions some find it difficult to take full advantage of the greater freedom to learn, for example, through science investigations, because they are not used to working in this way. Although more time has been allocated to the secular curriculum it still falls short of national recommendations. For example, in physical education the boys do not have sufficient time to develop a wide range of skills. There remain too few links between the secular curriculum and the Kodesh curriculum.

Arrangements for safeguarding pupils have been reviewed and overall meet requirements. Pupils say that they now know what to do if bullying should occur or if they are worried and that the staff will listen to them. The building is checked more regularly than in the past to make sure it is safe. In spite of improved displays in some classrooms, others are untidy. Consequently, they are not stimulating places and do not promote a positive attitude to learning.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in October 2006:

- Improve the quality of teachers' planning of activities to meet pupils' needs, with appropriate pace and challenge for their differing abilities – satisfactory progress
- Use the information from the school's assessments to make sure that all work is pitched at the right level to support pupils' learning, to monitor and track the progress that all pupils make and to identify where they could be doing better – satisfactory progress

## Leadership and management

The senior leadership team is well focused on tackling the issues from the last inspection through the clear action plan agreed with the LA. The executive headteacher has taken difficult decisions to place the school in a stronger position and to ensure that the teachers are committed to improvement. The appointment of a substantive deputy headteacher has removed an element of uncertainty created by the temporary nature of the senior leadership team. Nevertheless, the failure to appoint a substantive headteacher to lead the school in the longer term remains a considerable concern.

The senior leadership team has introduced comprehensive systems to check the planning, teaching and the curriculum. Weekly checks make sure that all teachers plan their lessons but evaluations are not yet incisive enough to help the teachers to rapidly accelerate the progress the boys are making. Changes to the curriculum were delayed. Improvements are recent and it is too early for the senior leaders to determine the impact on progress. Nevertheless, leaders are checking to make sure that a broader range of subjects is being taught. Analysis of the tracking of the boys' performance now provides an indication of their progress. This should provide senior leaders with a clearer evaluation of impact of their actions on the boys' progress.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in October 2006:

- Rigorously monitor the quality of provision, including the planned changes to the curriculum, and evaluate the effectiveness of actions by their impact on pupils' learning and progress – satisfactory progress

## External support

The LA has provided strong support for the school, for example, through the funding and work of the associate headteacher. There have been extensive support and monitoring from the LA link officer.

The LA's action plan is clear and challenging. It has measurable success criteria that provide specific milestones for improvements in standards, teaching and the monitoring of the school's performance.

## Main Judgements

The school, with the guidance of the LA, has taken appropriate steps to begin to tackle the issues it is facing but the temporary nature of the leadership team and some members of the teaching staff is a considerable cause for concern.

Newly qualified teachers may not be appointed.

Progress since being subject to special measures – satisfactory

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the chair of governors and the Education Officer for Barnet.

Yours sincerely

Christopher Parker  
Additional Inspector