

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
Bradley.Simmons@ofsted.gov.uk



15 July 2009

Ms Kim Beat
Headteacher
Braintcroft Primary School
Warren Road
London
NW2 7LL

Dear Ms Beat

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Braintcroft Primary School

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

The visit was the fourth monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures in November 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 – good

Newly qualified teachers may be appointed.

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 Brent.

Yours sincerely

Bradley Simmons
Her Majesty's Inspector

Special measures: monitoring of Braintcroft Primary School

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

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work over two days; scrutinised documents; and met with the headteacher, various staff, governors including the chair, and a representative from the local authority. Inspectors talked with pupils during lessons and at break-times, and with individual parents in the playground at the beginning of the day.

Context

Since the previous monitoring visit, a third deputy headteacher has been seconded from a local primary school to increase the capacity of the senior leadership team. Two class teachers have left the school. The secondment of an experienced Early Years Foundation Stage leader from another school for two and a half days each week continues until the end of this term.

The first deputy leaves the school in August 2009 after almost 30 years in the service of Braintcroft's children. She has given the headteacher her full support in developing the school while the school has been in special measures.

Achievement and standards

Pupils' progress is building from the bottom of the school upwards, with strengths also to be found in upper Key Stage 2.

In the Nursery, children continue to make good progress because of the consistently strong provision in this area. Reception children are now making good progress in some areas, and this is reflected in their improved Early Years Foundation Stage scores, which, although below expectations overall, are no longer exceptionally low. There are comparative strengths in personal, social and emotional development, in linking sounds and letters, and in writing. Reading has also improved on last year, though standards are still low. Children's skills in using language for communication remain very low.

In Key Stage 1, Year 1 pupils have made good progress this year. Year 2 pupils have made less than expected progress and their attainment is below average overall. No high-ability pupil attained the highest Level 3 in reading, writing or mathematics in statutory assessments. These poor results reflect a legacy of underachievement and, for some pupils, the discontinuity of provision they experienced over the past few years.

At Key Stage 2, progress for both Years 3 and 4 has also been less than expected because of discontinuity in teaching this year. The picture improves in upper Key



Stage 2, where good teaching overall is leading to better progress. Year 6 made very strong progress this year, exceeding their ambitious targets comfortably.

Progress since the last visit in the area for improvement:

- raise standards, initially in English and mathematics, by accelerating pupils' progress – satisfactory

Personal development and well-being

Pupils' behaviour remains good overall. There are very positive relationships between adults and pupils, and between pupils themselves. Pupils play well together and largely enjoy their work. A tremendous range of new play equipment has heightened pupils' enjoyment when playing outdoors. Behaviour during break-times was exemplary during this inspection. During the one assembly observed by HMI, children listened carefully and enjoyed a moral story, well related by the phase leader, about the importance of including everyone in play activities. However, during this assembly children had insufficient time for personal reflection.

Quality of provision

Steady improvement continues to be made in securing better-quality teaching. The common planning format was used in all classrooms during this visit. Teachers generally discuss learning objectives with pupils. Steps to success are listed on plans, but teachers do not consistently use them to best advantage. At times, they forget to mention them to pupils, or omit to use them effectively to help pupils evaluate what has been achieved. This notwithstanding, pupils say that learning is becoming more enjoyable, and that they have greater opportunities for collaborative work and paired discussion. Activities within lessons are, pupils say, more varied. HMI concur with this view.

In the growing proportion of good lessons, teachers' confidence is high. Pupils understand what they have to do. Teachers build well on previous learning and tasks are more effectively matched to pupils' needs and ability levels. In such lessons, teachers scan the room carefully, checking that all groups of pupils remain engaged in and enthused by learning. Teachers use targeted questions skilfully to evaluate pupils' understanding, and act speedily to address pupils' misconceptions. They move quickly around the room to check pupils' work, and deploy teaching assistants effectively to support the learning of different groups. At various points during lessons, these teachers often hold effective mini-plenaries, referring back to the learning objective and steps to success.

In weaker lessons, explanations lack clarity, teachers fail to check consistently that pupils understand what they are supposed to be doing, and misconceptions pass unchecked. Classes become restless, as teachers fail to use a variety of teaching strategies to keep pupils interested and learning. Teaching assistants are not deployed productively enough; teachers miss opportunities to include teaching assistants as participants in whole-class teaching sessions. At times, expectations of

teaching assistants are low. At others, individual teaching assistants do not show ready initiative in supporting the teacher with minor behaviour issues or to promote incidental learning by pupils. The most effective teaching assistants reflect upon their work, use their knowledge and understanding to ensure that work is modified in an engaging manner, and were seen using additional and alternative resources that they had often prepared themselves to meet pupils' needs. As a result, pupils' learning was maximised.

School policies in relation to marking and handwriting remain in an early stage of implementation, although a limited number of teachers follow both to good effect. One teacher's marking of writing has developed to the extent that it forms a very effective learning dialogue between her and her pupils.

The systematic teaching of phonics is having an increasingly positive impact, particularly on writing in the Reception Year and Year 1. Assessment of individual pupils' phonic knowledge is now much more secure. However, the growing phonic skills and abilities of pupils who receive specific interventions are not consistently reflected in these important assessments. In addition, the work conducted with individual pupils during interventions is not securely linked to work which these pupils tackle within the classroom.

Although the identification of pupils' needs has improved, planning for pupils with learning difficulties and pupils with English as an additional language is not yet rooted in a secure assessment of their ability and skill levels. Thus, class planning is sometimes too general in detailing how these children will be moved forwards.

The Early Years Foundation Stage continues to improve. On this visit, overall provision in Reception classes was satisfactory for the first time since the school became subject to special measures. This is because outdoor provision now reflects several of the six areas of learning. Additionally, there is now evidence of good teaching of systematic phonics for reading and writing, resulting in some higher-ability pupils attaining highly for their age. Outdoor provision in the Nursery is outstanding. Together with the high-level interactions between practitioners and children seen by HMI, it provides a stimulating experience which promotes children's development in all required areas. Such high-level interactions are not yet the norm across the Early Years Foundation Stage.

A scrutiny of a full assessment of a nursery child's learning presented a very strong picture, with pertinent and regular observations of the child's achievements across the entire Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum. Such assessments are now clearly being used to plan for the learning needs of children. Assessments of Reception children, although improved, particularly in linking sounds to letters, are not yet as comprehensive and coherent.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- improve teachers' use of assessment information in planning to meet the learning needs of pupils, including those in the early stages of learning English – satisfactory
- improve the quality of the provision in the EYFS to ensure that planned activities are based on regular and systematic observations of children's learning – good

Leadership and management

The senior leadership team has been strengthened by the temporary addition of a third deputy. As a result, analysis of data is now sharper and senior leaders, led by the first deputy, were able to present HMI with a cogent analysis of progress and attainment across all year groups. This has led to tailored actions to improve, for example, Year 4's progress. A similar start has been made in analysing the performance of some groups, but further work is necessary to ensure that the attainment and progress of different groups is reported in a form which enables easy comparison with the norm for the year group, school and, where available, national average.

The monitoring of teaching and learning continues regularly. The recent audit of mathematics teaching demonstrates that senior leaders are now rightly and accurately shining a brighter light during lesson observations on the quality of pupils' learning when they undertake formal lesson observations.

Senior leaders have spent much time attempting to establish greater consistency of practice across the school. The work of all three deputies in supporting some class teachers has begun to bear fruit. A number of teachers are leaving the school at the end of this term. The appointment of new staff gives senior leaders an opportunity to build on the greater consistency and enthusiasm seen in the classrooms of many staff during this inspection.

Governance is now good. The chair is now effectively supported across a range of governance functions by well-deployed colleagues who have good levels of expertise. Governing body minutes demonstrate that governors are now providing a good level of challenge; they ask incisive and appropriate questions about the school's performance. As a result, they are better informed about the school's work. A good proportion of governors attend local authority training to support school self-evaluation. The governors with whom HMI met have a clear and accurate view of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. Governors have been closely and constructively involved in the creation of the new school development plan, consulting with parents in this area. This has strengthened relationships within the community.

At the beginning of the first inspection day, many parents approached HMI in the playground to talk about their developing faith in the school's work, and to make

favourable comparisons between the experiences of their children now and two years ago.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- devise a rigorous approach to monitoring all aspects of the school's work and develop thorough systems, including the analysis of performance data, for evaluating the impact of provision on pupils' learning – good
- strengthen links with parents – good

External support

Local authority support since the last monitoring visit has been good. Focused attention from a senior member of the local authority's human resources team has paid dividends in resolving ongoing absence and competency issues relating to a number of staff. The local authority concedes that it has more to do to ensure that all personnel issues are handled in a timely manner that causes least disruption to provision for pupils.

The work of the School Improvement Partner continues to be good. He maintains an effective overview of the work of the various local authority consultants working within the school, ensuring that the school is not overwhelmed and that it remains focused on the essential improvement issues.