

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
John.Kennedy@ofsted.gov.uk



29 January 2009

Mr David McNaught
Headteacher
Canberra Primary School
Australia Road
London
W12 7PT

Dear Mr McNaught

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Canberra Primary School

Following my visit with David Humphries HMI and Anastasia Savva, Additional Inspector, to your school on 20 and 21 January 2009, 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 July 2008. The monitoring inspection report is attached and the main judgements are set out below.

Progress since being subject to special measures – satisfactory

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 Hammersmith and Fulham.

Yours sincerely

John Kennedy
H M Inspector

Special measures: monitoring of Canberra Primary School

Report from the first monitoring inspection on 20 and 21 January 2009

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work; scrutinised documents; and met with the headteacher, members of the leadership team and other staff, groups of pupils, members of the governing body and a representative from the local authority. Inspectors also spoke with a consultant from City Challenge and spoke informally with staff, parents and pupils during the course of the inspection.

Context

Since the last inspection, 13 new staff have taken up posts, including seven teachers, three of whom are on temporary contracts. Three of the teachers are newly qualified. In December 2008 the governing body appointed its existing vice-chair as the new chair of governors. Additional funding has been made available, for example from City Challenge, to improve the school building since the last inspection. This has enhanced the learning environment and the positive message has been welcomed by staff, parents and the pupils.

Achievement and standards

The headteacher and the leadership team have introduced good systems for tracking progress and, as a result, class teachers have a better knowledge of the progress that individual pupils and groups of pupils are making. Towards the end of the autumn term, the school undertook a thorough review of standards and achievement and were able to compare this with assessments undertaken in September. Most of the children's skills, aptitudes and standards continue to remain exceptionally low when they start in the school, especially in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) and Key Stage 1. Standards continue to remain very low throughout the school compared to what is expected nationally. Nevertheless, since the last inspection, more pupils have been making the progress expected for their age and, in each year group and across all ability levels, many are making accelerated gains. This is particularly so in reading and, to a lesser degree, in mathematics. For instance, while standards remain very low in Year 6, overall rates of progress, including those for mathematics and reading, were twice the age-expected rate. However, some pupils are making slower than expected progress and some are not yet progressing at a fast enough pace to make up sufficient ground by the end of the year. The few pupils with a statement of special educational needs are making good progress. Writing remains a challenge for most pupils and progress here has been slower.

There remains a lot of unevenness in the rates of progress between different ability groups, classes, year groups and subjects. The challenge for the school is to reduce this variability through more consistent teaching and learning and through targeted

support. Teachers share targets well with the pupils and consequently, in the lessons observed by inspectors, pupils were able to speak about the levels they were at and what they needed to learn to reach the next level. However, some pupils were less confident in their learning, for instance in applying what they had previously learnt to mathematical problems they were presented with in the lesson. Marking is generally good and helps pupils to understand what they should do to improve, though in some instances it is not accompanied by individual target plans for getting to the next level. Improvements to the curriculum, such as the daily programmes for phonics and 'times tables', contribute well to pupils' enjoyment of learning and their achievement.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- raise achievement and standards in English and mathematics, particularly in Years 3 to 6 – satisfactory

Personal development and well-being

Pupils get on well together. They told inspectors that they thought behaviour was one of the biggest areas of improvement since the last inspection. Parents have also commented favourably on the changes they have seen. Observations in lessons, assemblies and outdoor play confirm this. Improved behaviour by the majority of pupils contributes to a more purposeful working atmosphere in lessons. This is now a community where the pupils are ready to learn and it is helping them make better progress. There are still some instances of inattentive and distracting behaviour but these are generally well managed by class teachers and learning mentors, so that it does not affect the learning of others. A more systematic approach to managing behaviour is evident throughout the school. The number of days lost to exclusion has dropped from 43 during the autumn term 2007 to seven in the corresponding period in 2008. Few racist incidents have been recorded and these followed up promptly and effectively by the staff. Pupils are happy in lessons and enjoy their activities such as phonics. They also welcome being able to take part in clubs. Footballers in Year 6, for instance, are delighted that they now have a chance to take part in the Mayor's Cup and were proud to show off their skills to inspectors.

Attendance remains too low and well below expectations, even when consideration of school absenteeism for religious observance such as Eid is taken into account. The school has rigorous systems in place to follow up absences and the introduction of a credits system is having some impact. Compared to the same period in the previous year, weekly attendance for the autumn term 2008 has improved in 10 out of the 13 weeks. Attendance for the autumn term was highest in Year 6, with 93% attendance in one class and 95% in the other. However, attendance is only 90% for many classes. There are a small minority, particularly in Year 1, with attendance below 80% and over a quarter of the pupils have attendance levels below 90%. Punctuality has improved and there are few instances where pupils arrive after the register closes. The popularity of the daily phonics sessions is contributing to this improvement, as are the steps being taken by parents to ensure that their children

are on time. However, there are still a large number of late arrivals when the school starts which the staff are working hard to improve.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- improve behaviour, particularly that of boys, and reduce the level of exclusions – good
- improve pupils' attendance to bring it closer to national levels – satisfactory

Quality of provision

The school is making satisfactory progress in improving the quality of teaching and learning. Higher expectations are being set for teachers and there is evidence of a greater degree of challenge in many lessons resulting in better rates of progress for pupils of all abilities. Pupils comment that lessons are more enjoyable and teachers 'help you learn more'. Inspectors observed each class group and identified a number of strengths in the quality of teaching and learning. Teachers know their classes well and generally plan more effectively to meet their needs. This is a direct result of better and more detailed tracking information about each pupil and ability groups. Pupils, in turn, show an eagerness to learn and respond well, especially when they are given clear direction. Relationships are mostly positive and this supports the improving climate for learning that is now a more consistent feature of lessons. In the better lessons, the pace was brisk and teachers used skilful questioning to help pupils think, recall and build on previous learning. The good understanding senior leaders have of the quality of teaching and learning provides them with a solid base for identifying what action is needed to improve practice, for instance how to pitch lessons to meet and stretch the range of abilities in each class. Teachers and support staff are responsive to this guidance and direction. Behaviour is tightly managed for the most part and teachers' use of positive reinforcement encourages pupils to remain on track. The more consistent approaches that teachers are taking to encourage positive behaviour and the very good, flexible and proactive support of learning mentors contribute well to the pupils' improved behaviour.

Lesson observations indicate that there remain variations between lessons where teaching and learning are often good and lessons where aspects of the teaching and learning remain inadequate. Staffing instability in some year groups has also contributed to a lack of consistency. Inspectors identified a number of aspects of weaker teaching and learning. In lessons where planning was less effective, objectives were general sets of tasks and pupils were not clear about what was expected of them in terms of intended learning outcomes. In some lessons, time was not well managed. For instance, in a mathematics lesson, some pupils spent too much time writing down the lesson intention. Teachers and support staff generally worked well with pupils to help them make good progress. However, in some lessons, progress dipped because pupils who did not have sufficient ability to work at a good pace without direct supervision were not receiving the support they needed. In a few instances, teachers did not check carefully enough on how well these pupils were learning and opportunities to stretch them were missed. In some



instances, the deployment of additional staff was not used to maximise support, particularly for pupils for whom English is not their first language.

Staff give high priority to care and guidance, which is particularly evident in the awareness that staff have of the support required by pupils who are more vulnerable because of their personal circumstances. Effective support from external agencies enhances this provision. The school has appropriate safeguarding arrangements in place for vetting staff. Senior leaders have carried out a thorough analysis of pupils' needs and, as a result, have a more accurate understanding, for instance, of those who are at an early stage of speaking English as distinct from those whose needs arise from specific behavioural or learning difficulties. Consequently, the proportion of those regarded as having special educational needs, almost half the pupils at the last inspection, has been reduced to 18%. The school has correctly identified that specific support needs to be better targeted at those who speak English as an additional language, particularly in the EYFS and at Key Stage 1 where the number of pupils who are at an early stage of language acquisition is very high. This work is at an early stage of development. Pupils say that they find teachers' marking helpful as 'you know how you are doing in your book'. Pupils know their targets and these have a prominent place on their desks. Pupils also say they welcome the new structure for homework.

The school has good systems in place for following up attendance and lateness and this is having some impact. However, greater support is needed from some parents to ensure that their children attend school more regularly. Systems for analysing attendance patterns are in place but are not yet sufficiently refined to equip teachers with regular reports on patterns and trends at a class level. Changes to the curriculum since the last inspection have contributed positively to pupils' engagement and more positive attitudes to learning. Pupils remarked positively on the improved provision for physical education and extra opportunities for drama and street dance. The curriculum includes theme-based afternoons which have contributed to pupils' personal development, for example work on friendliness and anti-bullying.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- increase the challenge and expectations in teaching to meet the needs of all pupils, especially those learning English as an additional language – satisfactory

Leadership and management

The headteacher, who had been in the school a short time before the last inspection, provides strong leadership and management. He is well supported by the newly established leadership team. Morale is good among staff and they are motivated by a common determination and sense of purpose to secure improvements as rapidly as possible. Leaders and managers work effectively to guide and encourage staff, for example by providing support for newly qualified teachers. The staff take a systematic and rigorous approach to school improvement,



which is making inroads particularly in relation to behaviour and the progress of pupils. The headteacher and his senior leaders have undertaken observations of the quality of teaching and learning and work sampling and this is measured against clear expectations, particularly regarding the progress of pupils. These observations are accurate but, occasionally, the recording is not sufficiently explicit in evaluating the impact of teaching on the learning in a particular lesson.

Since the last visit, the headteacher and the leadership team have set up more robust systems to enable staff to have a secure understanding of standards and rates of progress. Consequently, they are more effective in tracking progress at individual, group and class levels. The headteacher and the leadership team now have a good understanding of where strengths and areas of weakness lie and are well placed to formulate a sharper school improvement plan. The aim is for this to contain more measurable and precise targets, for the remainder of the year and for 2009/10. It will include the necessary milestones to monitor and measure interim success and specify clear areas of responsibilities for staff, managers and governors. The headteacher has inherited a budget deficit. A meeting to discuss and agree a recovery action plan has been scheduled for the end of January. The budget deficit is potentially a barrier to developments and priority needs to be given to ensuring that there is coherence between the action plan to balance the budget and resources required to underpin the school improvement plan.

Additional parent governors have been appointed in addition to the new chair of governors. This will strengthen the governing body's capacity to build on the positive partnership with parents and the local community. Governors have changed the way they work and have established small working groups to enable them to get more directly involved in monitoring and evaluating aspects of the school's performance. Consequently, they are gaining a greater awareness of the progress being made since the last inspection. Although some of these developments are at a relatively early stage, these are positive signs of the action taken by the governors to strengthen their capacity to support the school and to hold it to account. Staff and governors do not underestimate the size of the task ahead and the need to accelerate the pace of change. They have made a satisfactory start, achieved a lot in a relatively short time and laid solid foundations for improvement. The signs are positive and the comment made by one of the governors that the school is a 'different place' reflects this well.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- develop rigorous systems for monitoring and evaluating the work of the school – good

External support

The local authority has offered a broad range of support to the school. It has also recognised the need for the school to manage this so as to build capacity from within its own resources. It has amended its statement of action. It specifies clear expectations for the areas of improvement identified at the last inspection, and

outlines the range of available support for the school and the monitoring and reporting arrangements. However, some refinements are still required. Some of the criteria for measuring success are not specific or quantifiable enough to be clear about how they can be monitored, for example the target for a substantial improvement in punctuality. While the range of support that is on offer is comprehensive, it is not clear which elements will be in place for the next two terms. There is also some overlap between those responsible for taking action and those monitoring its impact. The school will be refining its improvement plan in the light of its recent review of progress. There will need to be coherence and alignment between this and the local authority's statement of action, particularly in relation to measurable success criteria.

The local authority has appointed a new School Improvement Partner, who meets as appropriate with the headteacher and reports on progress. It has also used its powers to appoint two additional governors to strengthen the capacity of the governing body to support the school and hold it to account. The local authority has set a timescale for the school coming out of special measures by December 2009, with an expectation of demonstrable progress being made by the end of the 2008/09 academic year. It recognises that the school has had difficulties in the past and that sustainable improvement is needed. It is confident in the leadership provided by the headteacher and the growing strength of the governing body.

The school values the external support it has accessed to date, such as the advice and guidance of the Education Welfare Advisor. A City Challenge consultant has been providing valuable support in relation to teaching and learning and leadership. She has helped the school with lesson observations and is also brokering support from an outstanding neighbouring primary school to strengthen the practice of the leadership team. The consultant also chairs the newly established steering group which has met once and is tasked with overseeing the progress being made in helping the school come out of special measures.