

21 June 2007

Mr Ian Lucas
The Headteacher
The Gladys Aylward School
Windmill Road
Edmonton
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Dear Mr Lucas

SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF THE GLADYS AYLWARD SCHOOL

Introduction

Following my visit with David Gutmann, Additional Inspector, to your school on 11 June 2007, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the third monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures in May 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, spoke with students and met with the headteacher, the deputy and assistant heads, some heads of department, the school's literacy consultant, the London Challenge adviser and the school improvement partner.

Context

There have been some appointments to the teaching staff, including two new heads of department, since the last visit.

Achievement and standards

There have been no new external examination or test results. The school's internal tracking procedures are thorough and reliable. They show that students are likely to meet their targets for this summer.

The school has continued to work effectively on the development of literacy across all subject areas. The planned literacy training programme, tailored to individual staff needs, is now nearly complete. Leading teachers have modelled good practice and been filmed so that others can share their expertise. The school's monitoring shows that students in the accelerated groups are now making swifter progress than before. The effects of the training programme can be seen in lessons, where teachers are starting to use a greater variety of strategies to improve learning and motivate students. Students in one lesson seen by inspectors were advantaged because their teacher was aware of the level of difficulty of a text before they read it. In a Year 10 information and communication technology lesson, students considered the needs of their audience when drafting a report on the characteristics of successful websites, as a result of their teacher's active encouragement.

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

- Improving the development of literacy across the school – good progress

Personal development and well-being

The school has embarked on a programme of training and sharing good practice designed to improve student behaviour and attitudes in lessons. Although only in its early stages, it has already started to have an impact because all members of the teaching staff, including learning support assistants, are fully committed to its implementation. A full survey to measure its impact has not yet been carried out, but indications in lessons show that behaviour continues to improve and students are developing more positive attitudes to learning. Students who might otherwise remain passive in lessons are involved through the use of small wooden 'go-around' sticks, marked with their names. Students told the inspectors that they liked the new system. Behaviour around the school has also improved. There are several reasons for this, including further development of the student voice through the school council and improvements to the environment. There are now more benches and more areas where students can sit, with protection from the weather.

Quality of provision

The quality of teaching has improved and is satisfactory overall, with several good features. Lesson planning is more consistent than it was before. All teachers make sure students know what the lesson objectives are. Most plan a variety of activities for students, taking into account their differing needs and preferred ways of learning.

Some teachers do not encourage students to think for themselves enough and to understand the purposes of what they are doing. In some lessons seen, the teachers provided too much information and did not give students enough opportunities to work independently. However, good practice was seen in about half the lessons. For example, in a year 8 French lesson students were expected to take a measure of control, when placing a group of words into categories. They even had to make decisions about the nature of the categories themselves, and this prompted them to reflect productively on the purpose of what they were doing.

The care, guidance and support provided for students are now consistently good. The school's tracking procedures are finely tuned to the needs of students. Parents are involved at an early stage in understanding their children's progress. In many lessons, teachers refer to students' actual and predicted levels and grades in order to raise motivation and help them understand how to improve their work. However, this is not yet consistent across the whole school.

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

- Develop a secure, shared understanding of what constitutes effective learning – good progress
- Encourage independent learning and adopt a more creative, risk taking approach to teaching that excites and involves students – satisfactory progress
- Use reliable student performance data to ensure that lessons enable students to reach challenging targets – satisfactory progress

Leadership and management

The whole staff have a shared vision of what needs to be done in order to improve further. This is the result of rigorous and painstaking work by all members of the senior team working under the excellent guidance of the headteacher. Together, they have been able to introduce new ways of working and effective systems and procedures to move the school forward. The school rightly regards the development of the skills and capability of its staff as central to the process of improvement. It has many strategies to promote these and they are proving to be effective. Recently the staff introduced a method of improving behaviour, which depended on the rigorously consistent application of a set of strategies. The school's ethos was ready for such a concerted approach and this is illustrated by the fact that the overwhelming majority of staff made a positive choice to adopt it.

New appointments to the middle management have been made in the course of the last year, including some as recently as Easter. The people appointed to these important positions share the vision of the senior team and the whole staff. They have conducted an accurate evaluation of their department's needs and have already started to make an impact on improving the quality of provision within their areas of responsibility.

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

- Leadership and management at all levels, including governors, should improve standards and achievement – good progress

External support

The impact of external support, for example from London Challenge, the school improvement partner and the local authority, has been effective in helping the school to improve. By coaching teachers individually, consultants have enabled them to focus on ways of ensuring that all groups of students can achieve. The school has

taken advantage of expertise from a variety of sources, including support from the Hanover Partnership provided through London Challenge, and literacy support from the local authority. All this has helped the school move forward in relation both to students' learning and welfare needs.

Main Judgements

Progress since being subject to special measures – good

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – good

Newly qualified teachers may be appointed.

Priorities for further improvement

- Ensure consistency in using assessment data in lessons to set challenging targets and in developing strategies for enabling students to learn independently.

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

Yours sincerely

Alan Frith
Additional Inspector