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04 March 2011

Mrs Anita Rivers  
Headteacher  
Rolvenden Primary School  
Hastings Road  
Rolvenden  
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Kent  
TN17 4LS

Dear Mrs Rivers

### **Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools: monitoring inspection of Rolvenden Primary School**

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 15 February 2011, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during the inspection. Please thank Reverend Desrosiers, the staff and pupils for all their help. It was a pleasure to meet them.

Since the last inspection, numbers on roll have declined from 76 to 69. Consequently, the school's budget has decreased and restructuring has resulted in a 0.8 teacher redundancy and less administrative office hours being available. One part-time teacher left, a full-time teacher reduced her hours and the teaching commitment of the headteacher was increased. Four classes have been reduced to three, although an innovative arrangement means that four teaching groups have been maintained in the mornings. Years 4, 5 and 6 pupils are now grouped in ability sets for English and mathematics. Links with other schools locally have been developed, with staff sharing training opportunities and being involved in joint monitoring and moderating of pupils' learning. The School Improvement Partner, who supports the school on behalf of the local authority, has only been in post for four weeks.

Substantial improvements to dedicated outdoor provision for the youngest children have successfully enhanced the learning environment, and the construction of a pond and garden has resulted in a prestigious nature award.

As a result of the inspection on 20 January 2010, the school was asked to address the most important areas for improvement, which are set out in the annex to this letter.



Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time the school has made:

good progress in making improvements

and

good progress in demonstrating a better capacity for sustained improvement.

Strengths in personal development and the way the school cares for pupils, particularly those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, have been maintained. Pupils continue to show positive attitudes and behave well. Relationships are good throughout and pupils show consideration for others and are ready to listen. The school's friendly, positive ethos has its roots in the way Reception children are given opportunities to work and play together through a good mix of child- and teacher-directed activities. Sharing and turn-taking foster good social development. Learning is fun! The anticipation that an alien was about to visit the Year R and Year 1 classroom set the place buzzing.

Although it is too soon to expect a marked improvement in trends in attainment since the previous inspection, results of national assessments were better in 2010 than the previous year. Noting that statistics can be misleading in small year groups, the overall profile was broadly average. Predictions for those in the current Year 6, based on much better assessment, recording and analysis, suggest that at the end of the school year, improvements in attainment will have been consolidated. Most obvious is the rise in pupils' average point scores in mathematics, which appears to be the direct result of the school's focus on teaching and learning in this subject.

There has been good progress in improving the quality of teaching. Regular and accurate monitoring and effective feedback on strengths and areas for development are helping teachers to move their overall performance from satisfactory towards good. This is successfully supported by teachers' much better use of data to set targets for individual pupils, as well as for ability groups. Learning objectives are made clear to pupils and support staff in each lesson and used to measure progress by. Staff work well together to evaluate pupils' progress. They moderate the quality of work effectively to validate the accuracy of their assessments. This has resulted in teachers having much higher expectations of what pupils are capable of achieving. These are being well communicated to pupils through teachers' good interaction and questioning, with encouraging effects on learning. However, although work is marked, there are too few written references to pupils' targets and little explanation of how improvements are to be made.

Work is planned and delivered at different ability levels and there is good consideration of mixed-age classes to ensure that the rolling programme avoids unnecessary repetition. A particularly good initiative has been in how creativity has



been built into the curriculum to make work interesting. For example, Years 2 and 3 larger-than-life models of toys and characters from books have captured pupils' imagination and are having a positive effect on the quality of writing. The introduction of setting by ability for Years 4, 5 and 6 is having a notable impact on pupils' progress, especially in mathematics. Good opportunities are now provided to ensure pupils' mental skills are suitably developed. In lessons observed, pupils made good progress in speed and accuracy of mental calculations. Work seen in lessons and in pupils' books confirms, as is evident in the school's own records, that problem solving challenges pupils appropriately.

Improvements are underpinned by the good leadership and management of the headteacher and governors, well supported by the local authority. There is a strong collective agreement that improvements are proving effective. A growing understanding that the key to the progress being made is in how effectively assessment is used is at the heart of the school's development. Drawing pupils into this process so that they actively analyse and evaluate their own performance and that of their classmates is paying dividends, especially in terms of the progress more-able pupils make.

Community cohesion was not a focus of this visit. However, it is clear from school planning, discussions with the headteacher and displays around the school that weaknesses in opportunities for pupils to develop an understanding of lifestyles, faiths and customs in contrasting parts of the United Kingdom have yet to be overcome. Planning to address this has been recently introduced. It is too soon to see a marked improvement.

I hope that you have found the inspection helpful in promoting improvement in your school. This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Mike Burghart  
**Additional Inspector**



## **Annex**

### **The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in January 2010**

- Raise the quality of teaching and learning from satisfactory to good by:
  - giving pupils more responsibility for their learning and raising expectations of how quickly pupils can make progress
  - using data more effectively to make sure teaching more precisely meets the needs of all pupils and provides consistent challenge.
- Raise attainment in mathematics by:
  - improving pupils' mental mathematics skills
  - providing more opportunities for pupils to use and apply their mathematical skills in problem-solving activities.