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Mrs A Palmer
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Dear Mrs Palmer

SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF GLOUCESTER ROAD PRIMARY SCHOOL

Introduction

Following my visit to your school on 13 March, 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 November 2005. This shorter visit focused on pupils' behaviour, their care, and leadership and management of the school.

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

I observed lunchtimes, playtimes and part lessons in all classes, and scrutinised documents. I held discussions with the headteacher, key staff, pupils, and the chair of governors.

Context

Since the last visit, a teacher was appointed to cover the mixed Years 3 and 4 class for the spring and summer term. The process of appointing a new deputy headteacher to start in September is well advanced.

Achievement and standards

Children in the Foundation Stage are making satisfactory progress. Improvements to class organisation, such as creating distinct work areas in the class, are helping to stretch pupils' thinking and develop their abilities more quickly. In Years 1 and 2, better teaching is helping pupils to be more confident in their spelling and vocabulary. Their mathematics work indicates that number skills are improving at a satisfactory rate. In Years 3 to 6, standards are edging nearer to those expected for pupils' age. Recent reviews by the local authority and the subject coordinator indicate Year 5 pupils are now more confident in mathematics. Their number work is accurate, presented carefully, and close to the levels expected for their age. Pupils' weak speaking skills, highlighted in the last visit, are slowly improving. The Years 5 and 6 class assembly demonstrated pupils' greater confidence to speak in front of others, but there is still some way to go until their improved confidence is matched by their clarity. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities make similar progress to their classmates due to the close support they receive both within the class and by individual help out of class.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in November 2005:

- raise standards and improve achievement by making sure that learners of all ages are given work to do that meets their needs and capabilities – not assessed in this visit

Personal development and well-being

Pupils' personal development has improved since the last monitoring visit. Breaktimes are more productive and harmonious as a result of improved routines, equipment and range of play activities. Pupils cooperate well with each other and enjoy using the new play equipment. Staff training and the more efficient serving of lunches have led to more positive and settled behaviour in the dining room. Although pupils are aware of which foods are healthier for them, a minority do not choose these. The school council is now more established and beginning to influence change. However, not all representatives are sufficiently confident to speak at meetings and systems for consulting and feeding back to classes are not yet in place.

Quality of provision

The quality of teaching is improving and the weaknesses that were noted in the recent local authority review are being remedied. Teaching in the Foundation Stage has improved and is now generally satisfactory. Independent work in class and outside activities is now better planned, but access to the outside area is still too restricted to extend children's independence sufficiently well. In the mixed Years 1 and 2 class, confident teaching stretches pupils' thinking more effectively as group work is planned well and the expectations of what pupils can do are higher. This results in

them making better progress in their English work. In Years 3 to 6, the quality of teaching has a greater proportion of good features. Pupils' behaviour is well managed and displays in classrooms provide pupils with good examples of work and guidance about how to improve. In some classes the pace of the lesson is slow which reduces the pupils' motivation. Activities in Years 5 and 6 did enthuse pupils, however, as they involved them in practical work such as recording a radio advert and in suggesting how these could be improved.

The care, guidance and welfare of pupils have improved since the last visit., changes to playtime routines, and better recognition of pupils' achievements, help them to feel safe and valued. Pupils report that the playground feels a nicer and calmer place to be. Those who have learning difficulties or are vulnerable are closely monitored and their needs are met effectively. Marking has improved Years 1 and 2 and is now good across the school. Comments guide pupils effectively in how they can improve, whilst praising good work. The use of target setting in mathematics and English is now established and pupils are using these better to direct their efforts to improve. However, termly assessment and tracking of pupils' progress is not used well enough to identify those pupils needing an extra 'push' to reach the levels expected.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in November 2005:

- improve the quality of marking in Years 1 and 2 – good
- improve the quality and provision of accommodation and resources within the Foundation Stage – satisfactory.

Leadership and management

Leadership and management have continued to improve since the last monitoring visit. Reviews by the local authority indicate that the vision and determination to improve is becoming more established among all staff and the governors. Monitoring procedures are clear, covering a wide number of aspects and planned throughout the year. Realistic self-evaluation has resulted in a clear action plan which enables the school to focus its work on the key priorities for improvement. The process of updating teaching and learning policy has helped to increase staff motivation, by involving them in discussing and agreeing what makes teaching effective. The coordinators for English and mathematics identify strengths and weaknesses clearly. They have appropriate action plans to oversee their subject, but other subjects are not yet managed as effectively.

Governors support the school well. The chair of governors has reviewed areas of the governing body's work conscientiously and this has resulted in clearer roles for committees and a more focused approach to gathering evidence. Governors have struck the right balance between supporting the school and using monitoring information to challenge the school to improve further.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in November 2005:

- rectify the weaknesses in the leadership and management of the school – good
- improve the rigour and robustness of the self-evaluation and monitoring process – good.

External support

The local authority has carried out two major reviews since the last monitoring inspection which has helped the school to address the weaker areas identified. The reviews also recognised strengths, including the continued improvements made to the leadership and management of the school. Training provided for midday supervisors and governors, and ongoing support to help boost pupils' skills in mathematics, has contributed to the school's good progress since the last monitoring inspection.

Main Judgements

Progress since being subject to special measures – satisfactory.

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – good.

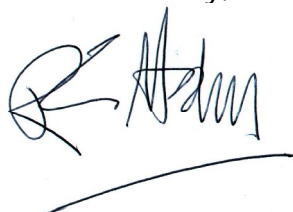
Newly qualified teachers may not be appointed until further notice.

Priorities for further improvement

- Improve the use of assessment to target those pupils who need extra help to improve their progress.
- Extend the good coordination seen in English and mathematics to more subjects to help guide their development.
- Create regular opportunities to allow members of the school council to seek the views of classmates and to update them on emerging issues.

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

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'K. Hodge', with a long horizontal line underneath it.

Kevin Hodge
Additional Inspector