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Mrs Barbara Abbey
Acting Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Abbey

SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF GORRINGE PARK PRIMARY SCHOOL

Introduction

Following my visit to your school on 2 July 2007 with Susan Gregory HMI, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the second monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures in November 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 and met with school staff including the acting headteacher, the consultant headteacher, the chair of governors, and a representative of the local authority.

Context

Since the previous monitoring visit in March the substantive headteacher has been on sick leave and the school is currently being led by an acting headteacher, with the support of a consultant headteacher for two days a week. A new chair of governors was appointed shortly before this visit. At the last visit weaknesses were found in the Foundation Stage. Because of these factors, this visit focussed on the quality of provision in the Foundation Stage, achievement and standards, and aspects of leadership and management.

The Penguin Out of School Club, which provides a day nursery and out of school care, was also inspected at the same time as this monitoring visit. It was found to

provide a valuable service to the school community and offers satisfactory standards of care overall. The staff at the day nursery work hard to ensure that the children are safe and happy. However, there are some issues, including aspects of hygiene and documentation, which do not meet National Standards. The out of school care for children over three years of age offers a range of worthwhile activities and is well organised in most respects.

Achievement and standards

This visit found evidence that children are beginning to make better progress, particularly at Key Stage 2. Inspectors judge that children begin the Foundation Stage well below national expectations in communication, language and literacy, and below average in mathematical development. This confirms the school's own judgement. Evidence provided by the school shows that children of all abilities are currently making satisfactory progress in personal, social and emotional development, communication language and literacy, and mathematical development. As was noted at the last visit, children make satisfactory progress in Key Stage 1 due to high expectations and a good use of assessment information to monitor progress. Early analysis of the Key Stage 1 results confirms this. The results indicate at least satisfactory progress in English and science, and perhaps better in mathematics.

Results in the national Key Stage 2 tests in science, which became available on the day of the visit, show a marked improvement from last year; almost three quarters of children achieved above the expected level. The school attributes this to focussed intervention following the results of trial tests in April; this was not done last year. Data provided by the school indicates an improvement in standards across Key Stage 2, and that achievement in both English and mathematics will be at least satisfactory. The school attributes this to higher expectations of the quality of children's work and better use of assessment data. The limited number of lessons observed at Key Stage 2 during this visit, and scrutiny of the school's own record of observation, tends to support this view. However, some inconsistencies remain in the monitoring of mathematics and science at both Key Stages 1 and 2. This has resulted, for example, in the significant under prediction of Key Stage 2 science results.

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

- Raise teachers' expectations of the quality and standard of work that pupils can produce, to enable them to reach higher standards in English, mathematics and science – good progress

Quality of provision

As the Foundation Stage was judged to be inadequate in March, this visit focused on provision in the Nursery and Reception classes. There has been good progress in addressing the indoor provision which is much improved, and is now a stimulating and interesting learning environment. However, the outdoor areas still require

improvement. Much of the planning across the Foundation Stage has developed because staff are using a good structure which identifies clearly what children should learn. However, some of the planning sheets, such as the one used to highlight discussion times, do not yet identify the next steps in children's learning. The early evaluation of the Foundation Stage Profile indicates that there has been improvement in the scores for communication, language and literacy, mathematics, and personal, social and emotional development. There has been a perceptible shift in the achievements of both lower and higher ability children. However, too much teaching in Reception remains inadequate. The school has taken some action to support the areas of weakness, but accepts that the quality of teaching and learning now needs to be addressed more urgently.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the monitoring visit in March 2007: satisfactory

Leadership and management

There has been good progress in giving clearer direction to school improvement because the senior leadership team are now much more tightly focused on improving the quality of teaching and the achievement of children. The roles and responsibilities of senior leaders have now been clarified by the acting headteacher, so that they are more closely aligned to the key task of driving up standards. She is carrying out her new role well. Teachers are being observed more regularly and, as a result of training provided by the local authority, there is much greater clarity about what constitutes good teaching. A performance management policy has been agreed with staff and ratified by the governing body. There is more work to be done to ensure that the results of this improved monitoring are accurately analysed and used to hold teachers to account for children's performance; for example, the inadequate teaching in Reception and some inconsistencies in monitoring and assessment.

The newly appointed chair of governors has a good grasp of the strategic way forward for the school. He intends to appoint a new 'Standards Committee' that will monitor children's academic progress throughout the school, and training is planned for the governing body in the autumn term. The governing body is working closely with the local authority to ensure the long term stability of the leadership team.

The school now has a more accurate picture of its strengths and weaknesses and the capacity to improve has been strengthened by: the appointment of a consultant headteacher, greater support and challenge from the local authority, and an improved grasp of the standards agenda by the governing body. It will be important that the governors' plan to appoint an interim deputy headteacher to further strengthen capacity is realised if the good overall progress seen on this visit is to be maintained.

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

- Give clearer direction to school improvement, so that goals are clearly recognised, ways to get there are mapped out and methods agreed for measuring when they are reached – good progress
- Establish systems of performance management for staff in order to improve the quality of teaching – satisfactory progress

External support

Since the first monitoring visit the school has benefited from both greater support and challenge by the local authority. It swiftly appointed the consultant headteacher, which has been key to moving the school forward. The local authority's statement of action now clearly identifies the important actions that it will take, details the resources it will allocate, and specifies how it will monitor its impact.

Main Judgements

Progress since being subject to special measures – satisfactory

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – good

Newly qualified teachers may be appointed to teach Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 classes, but not to teach in the Foundation Stage.

Priorities for further improvement

- Rapidly tackle the inadequate teaching in the Foundation Stage
- Improve the outdoor area in the Foundation Stage

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the chair of governors and the Head of School Improvement for Merton.

Yours sincerely

Michael Lynes
H M Inspector