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Ms Susan Mortimer
The Headteacher
Rose Hill Primary School
The Oval
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Dear Ms Mortimer

SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF ROSE HILL PRIMARY SCHOOL

Introduction

Following my visit with Judith Dawson, Additional Inspector and Patricia Walker, Additional Inspector to your school on 10 and 11 July 2007, 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 January 2007.

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 the headteacher, members of the senior leadership team (SLT), the literacy and numeracy co-ordinators, the designated Foundation Stage teacher, the visiting artist, groups of pupils, the vice chair of governors and a representative from the local authority (LA).

Context

The LA continues to consider the possibility of Fresh Start status. The headteacher has assumed responsibility for the children's centre from April 2007. There have been some changes in staffing this year including seven new colleagues who will take up their posts in September. Classes continue to be fully staffed but the post of deputy headteacher remains vacant. Interviews will be held in the autumn term.

Achievement and standards

The provisional Key Stage 2 outcomes for 2007 show some improvement in the English and science results with the majority of pupils having attained the expected level. Mathematics results are lower than last year and the school, rightly, has planned to make this the focus for improvement in the autumn term, with appropriate LA support. At Key Stage 1, despite an overall slight improvement in the results, no pupils in the mixed-age class attained the expected level in reading, writing or mathematics. The school has identified this unacceptable situation and is making substantial changes to the organisation of the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 to procure parity of provision for all pupils. In both key stages too few pupils achieved at the higher level.

Generally, pupils' class work in English and science is close to the expected levels for their ages. In mathematics standards are lower. Pupils' limited vocabulary and lack of confidence inhibits the quality of their discussions and thus their progress across the curriculum. Pupils do not have sufficient opportunities to articulate their thinking clearly; too few adults expect this of them. In a good mathematics lesson and a lively science lesson, where the teachers used extended questioning effectively, the pupils' responses became progressively clearer and more articulate. However, in too many lessons adults accepted incomplete or unclear answers, clarifying the pupils' responses themselves to enable the rest of the class to understand what had been said.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in January 2007:

- Raise standards and improve achievement in English, mathematics and science in Years 1 to 6 - satisfactory progress.

Personal development and well-being

In spite of the school's rigorous efforts to improve attendance, such as by holding parents to account more stringently and by having inter-class competitions, attendance remains below average. Most pupils enjoy school and are appreciative of the improved range of interesting experiences that they are offered, talking about these with obvious enthusiasm. They enjoy their friendships and value their relationships with most adults in the school. The majority of the pupils work hard and are keen to please. However, a few are disconcerted when adults become angry with them. While behaviour in lessons is at least satisfactory, there are elements of restlessness and inconsiderate behaviour which other pupils find unsettling. Pupils are developing a clearer understanding of the role of the school council but, as yet, its impact is limited. Younger pupils offered and evaluated ideas for improved recreational equipment with considerable maturity in one class council meeting. Pupils across the age range feel that opportunities for them to take meaningful responsibility are limited. They feel safe in school but are well aware that there are incidences of bullying that cause them anxiety. They are showing an increasing awareness that things such as persistent name calling are not acceptable.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in January 2007:

- Enable pupils to play an extensive, active and positive role in school life - satisfactory progress.
- Take rigorous steps to improve attendance - satisfactory progress.

Quality of provision

The quality of teaching overall is satisfactory. Some good teaching was seen in Key Stages 1 and 2 and this good practice needs to become the norm in all classes. Weaknesses in teaching were evident in the match of work to pupil's needs in mathematics.

The tracking and assessment of pupils' work has improved substantially this year. Consequently, the school now identifies areas of underachievement with greater speed and accuracy than in the past. Senior staff are using this data exceptionally well to provide suitable intervention programmes for a wide range of pupils. However, there is inconsistency in the use of this data by class teachers to plan individual lessons. Some lessons are stimulating and exciting and pupils respond with enthusiasm. Other areas that have improved since the section 5 inspection include the use of learning objectives to provide a clearer focus for lessons; some teachers have raised expectations about what their pupils can achieve and more teachers are giving clear written guidance to help pupils understand how to improve their work. However, teachers do not always ensure that this is followed up. Too few of the pupils were aware of their learning targets.

Where lessons lack challenge and relevance pupils are quick to lose interest and learning is impeded. This is sometimes caused by adults' lack of knowledge and expertise, which also results in poor planning. More frequently, the pupils' loss of interest is the result of questioning that does not engage or extend their thinking. In some classes, work was not pitched at a suitable level and pupils either did not have the skills necessary to complete the work or it was too easy and did not stretch them.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in January 2007:

- Improve the quality of teaching and ensure that tasks are well matched to pupils' needs and that they are stimulated and challenged in lessons - satisfactory progress.

Leadership and management

The headteacher has provided outstanding leadership that has enabled standards to rise and satisfactory progress to be made in other areas of the school's life. Staff have been enabled to develop and improve their management skills. The school's processes and procedures have been overhauled rigorously and staff report a far more positive atmosphere than at the time of the previous inspection. The staff and the pupils have responded well to most of the new initiatives. The interior décor has been improved greatly through the headteacher's efforts although some toilets remain quite unpleasant and some classrooms do not offer an inviting learning environment. However, the poor overall condition of the building and playground are

not conducive to the provision of high quality education envisaged by the senior leadership team. They are most supportive of the headteacher and have enabled the school to collate data to prove where progress has been made. Appropriate decisions have been made to ensure parity of provision for younger pupils. Staff monitoring and support have helped to improve the quality of teaching and difficult decisions have been taken to ensure that pupils' learning is to the fore. Links with parents and the wider community have been strengthened to the benefit of the pupils. For example, Raymond Blanc, the world renowned chef, has visited the school and has offered support to improve the quality of school lunches.

The lack of a deputy headteacher is being addressed and the governors realise that it is imperative that the headteacher is supported at this level in the near future. A small core of governors is carrying the main burden of providing support and challenge to the school. Their proposal for re-distributing this load is timely and appropriate.

External support

The LA has provided a good range of effective teaching and management support to enable the headteacher to move the school forward this year. The school's attached adviser has an exceptionally clear idea of the school's needs. Her determination to effect improvement within a reasonable timescale is exemplified by the high quality of her advice and the practical support that she has provided. The LA has agreed a five-year plan to eradicate the outstanding budget deficit.

Main Judgements

Progress since being subject to special measures – satisfactory

No further newly qualified teachers may be appointed.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the chair of governors and the Principal Administrative Officer for Oxfordshire.

Yours sincerely

Catherine Munt
H M Inspector