

Tribal Group
1-4 Portland
Square
Bristol
BS2 8RR
T 0845 123 6001
F 0845 123 6002

T 08456 40 40 40
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk



13 July 2007

Ms J Virk
The Headteacher
Rowlatts Hill Primary School
Balderstone Close
off Ambassador Road
Leicester
LE5 4ES

Dear Ms Virk

SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF ROWLATTS HILL PRIMARY SCHOOL

Introduction

Following my visit with Philip Martin, Additional Inspector, on 3 and 4 July 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, and met with the headteacher, pupil representatives from the school council, the chair of governors, nominated staff, and a representative from the local authority (LA).

Context

The headteacher took up post in April 2007. Five teachers, including the subject leaders in mathematics and science, are leaving at the end of term. Two of these class teachers were absent during the inspection.

Achievement and standards

The standards of pupils' work across all subjects remain below age related expectations. Unvalidated 2007 test results indicate that there has been improvement in the proportion of pupils gaining the expected Level 4 in end of Key Stage 2 English tests, although overall levels of attainment have not increased

compared with the previous year. Standards in assessments at the end of Key Stage 1 are also very low, reflecting the weak cohort of Year 2 pupils and the considerable turbulence experienced by this year group. The school has not met its targets; standards remain too low in English, mathematics and science.

Although standards are still not as high as they should be and progress is not yet assured in all classes, improvements continue to be made. Target setting and tracking are systematic and increasingly rigorous, particularly at a whole school level. The pupils' progress is carefully monitored through regular assessments of reading, writing, mathematics and science; suitable steps have been taken to ensure that these are accurate and reliable. Analysis of this information is thorough and is used to identify pupils that are not making enough progress. Teachers have a clearer understanding of the standards that pupils should reach and the rates of progress that they should make. The school's evaluation indicates that planned interventions have accelerated the progress of targeted pupils.

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

- set pupils challenging targets for attainment which are regularly reviewed – *satisfactory*.

Personal development and well-being

The school has made good progress in strengthening the pupils' personal development. Improvements noted at the time of the last visit have been consolidated and extended. There is now a settled climate for learning and a palpable sense of enjoyment in many of the lessons. Pupils' attitudes to learning and standards of behaviour are generally good. Improvements in teaching mean that pupils are more confidently engaged in their learning. In addition, steps taken to strengthen the support and guidance for pupils, such as the appointment of a learning mentor and the introduction of the nurture group, have contributed positively to the pupils' personal development and well-being.

The role of the school council has been developed. Pupils have gained in confidence in their roles and have carried out a variety of initiatives. They are excited about the improvements that have been made, or are planned for the school, and by their involvement in making decisions. They are particularly motivated by the new systems of rewards and are responding positively to the school's burgeoning culture of praise.

At 93.1% for the year to date, attendance remains below average. The headteacher has taken a suitably robust line on attendance and punctuality. However, despite signs of recent improvement, attendance and punctuality remain significant problems.

Quality of provision

The quality of teaching and learning continues to improve and is broadly satisfactory. However, it is not yet consistently good enough to make up for the pupils' previously inadequate progress or their low starting points. In a few cases, work is still not matched well enough to their needs and some pupils find work too difficult or too easy.

The positive developments noted during the previous visit are becoming more securely fixed. Good relationships are evident. Teachers use the well understood behaviour policy effectively and lessons are more interesting and more fun than they were. As a result, most children behave well in lessons and make better progress. Teachers have worked hard to make classrooms more stimulating and lively places to learn. Good use is made of a variety of learning resources, including new interactive whiteboards, to give pupils a better variety of activities. Learning objectives are properly shared at the start of lessons and in the best sessions these are skilfully revisited at key points in order to consolidate the pupils' gains. Where the pupils themselves are closely involved in reviewing their own progress and outcomes against planned objectives, they have a better understanding of what they could and should achieve, and their learning is more secure.

The use of marking and individual targets is improving, particularly in English when teachers make useful comments that provide feedback and advice to pupils on how to improve. Too often, however, comments do not guide what the pupils need to do next or are not followed up so pupils do not make the expected improvements, and too little reference is made to pupils' individual targets. The school recognises these shortcomings and is working to improve further the effectiveness of marking.

Provision for pupils with special educational needs, including the work of learning support assistants, has been suitably reviewed and strengthened. It is better coordinated and planned so that teaching assistants have clear roles and responsibilities in lessons and are able to offer a good level of support for different groups of pupils. They themselves are pleased with the way their roles are developing and feel they play an increasingly valuable part in helping to secure pupils' progress and the school's development.

Provision in the Foundation Stage is good and is a strength of the school. Children start in the Nursery with skills that are well below those expected, particularly in their social and communications skills. Because of good teaching, a well organised and innovative curriculum and structure, they make good progress. All adults work well together and make a major contribution to this progress. By the time children leave the Reception class their attainment is still below what might be expected overall, but the gap has narrowed considerably. Sensible plans are in place to review the Year 1 curriculum next year and to extend some of the good practice from the Foundation Stage.

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

- improve the effectiveness of teaching, especially by matching work to pupils' needs and capabilities and increasing the pace of learning – satisfactory.

Leadership and management

The headteacher has skilfully managed the transition from the previous interim leadership in order to consolidate and accelerate the school's improvement. She has successfully focused her efforts but also worked across a broad front to improve provision, strengthen leadership, and achieve better outcomes for pupils both in terms of their progress and personal development. Important improvements have been made to the school's accommodation and further developments, including building a children's centre on site, are planned. The headteacher has a clear vision for the school's future and has communicated unequivocally her high expectations to staff, pupils and parents. Policies and procedures have been reviewed so that staff can work consistently for the benefit of the pupils. Almost all staff feel supported, empowered and valued; morale is good.

The overall quality of leadership continues to strengthen as the school begins to take responsibility for its own improvement. Leadership in English is good. However, the strategic leadership of mathematics and science has been too heavily dependent on guidance from the headteacher and external consultants. Elsewhere the roles and responsibilities of staff are developing very well. Leadership in the Foundation Stage is particularly good, as is curriculum leadership in art. The roles of the coordinators for assessment and special educational needs are developing well and are having a positive impact on teaching provision.

School self-evaluation is accurate and effectively guides improvement planning. The draft two year improvement plan outlines appropriate priorities and actions to develop the school. It is soundly based on effective monitoring and evaluation and has involved the whole staff. Governors, too, are developing their monitoring role so that they are better informed about the school's strengths and areas for development.

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

- ensure all leaders monitor the performance of the school rigorously and follow this through to action where improvement is needed – good.

External support

The local authority continues to provide effective guidance and consultancy support for the school, including support from the behaviour service and training for governors. The headteacher manages this well in order to maximise its impact and to ensure that the school effectively develops its own capacity for self improvement.

However, the school remains dissatisfied with the quality of support for improving attendance and punctuality.

Main Judgements

The school has experienced a cultural change over the last year. Staff are committed to securing improvements and have worked very hard to implement agreed policies and procedures. The school recognises that standards are not yet high enough and that more needs to be done to accelerate pupils' progress. Under the headteacher's excellent leadership the school is now in a strong position to consolidate its improvement.

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – good.

Progress since being subject to special measures – satisfactory.

Priorities for further improvement

- Make more effective use of existing assessment procedures, particularly through marking and target setting, to guide more precisely what pupils need to do to improve the standard of their work.
- Share the best practice that exists in all aspects of teaching and learning so that pupils make consistently good progress.
- Strengthen subject leadership in mathematics and science.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the chair of governors and the Director of Children and Young People's Services for Leicester City.

Yours sincerely

Paul Brooker
Her Majesty's Inspector