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Mrs Liz Hills
The Acting Headteacher
Eveline Lowe Primary School
Marlborough Grove
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Dear Mrs Hills

SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF EVELINE LOWE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Introduction

Following my visit with Liz Pike, Additional Inspector and June Woolhouse, Additional Inspector to your school 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 first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures in February 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 acting headteacher, several members of staff, pupils, governors and representatives from the local authority (LA).

Context

Since the inspection in February, the headteacher and an assistant headteacher have left. The school remains in a 'soft' federation (a form of cooperation) with nearby Ilderton Primary School and, as a result of intervention by the LA, the headteacher of that school is currently the part-time acting headteacher at Eveline Lowe. Other staff from Ilderton School are working alongside Eveline Lowe staff.

Achievement and standards

Pupils' progress and achievement remains inadequate and inconsistent across the school. However, early indications from this year's end of key stage tests show that

attainment has improved in English and mathematics in Year 6. Higher attaining pupils have achieved well, particularly in reading, and the school's target has been exceeded. At the end of Year 2, results also indicate improvement in reading, writing and mathematics.

The improvement in support through the soft federation and the LA is helping produce some examples of better practice in planning, teaching and assessment, resulting in some instances of increased progress.

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

- Raise achievement in English, mathematics and science – satisfactory progress

Personal development and well-being

As at the February inspection, pupils are friendly and well-behaved both in class and during break times. They socialise well, feel safe and like coming to school. Pupils enjoy the games and activities provided at playtimes and the lovely school grounds. They appreciate the opportunities to take responsibility but, apart from the school council of which they spoke knowledgeably, these responsibilities are organised within individual classes. There is not a consistent whole-school approach to encouraging pupils' development in this area.

They appreciate their work being displayed around the school as it celebrates their success. During an assembly, younger pupils were excited to listen to a group of older pupils playing brass instruments. There are missed opportunities for pupils' multi-cultural development, especially given the school's ethnically diverse population.

Quality of provision

Members of staff are highly committed to the pupils and work hard but teaching styles and approaches can be too different from class to class as there are few systems to ensure consistency. This leads to the variable progress rates made by pupils. Opportunities for staff development, discussion and sharing ideas are limited, so the school is not benefiting fully from its teachers' expertise. The relationships teachers build with pupils are good and enhance pupils' behaviour. Even in the lessons with weaknesses, relationships, class management and behaviour are often strong; this demonstrates a secure capacity for improvement within the teaching staff.

Academic guidance is weak because assessment is inconsistent and tracking of pupils' progress is at a very early stage of development. As a result, work given to pupils is often too easy for them and does not match their needs. Where there is good practice, pupils know how to improve their work but there are no whole-school systems to ensure that all pupils have the same opportunities. Evidence in pupils'

work, including musical performances and displays around the school, shows that the curriculum has a number of interesting and engaging features.

There have been some very recent constructive developments in the school's provision for pupils with specific learning needs and for those who need help speaking and understanding English. They are at an embryonic stage and there is no evidence of their impact on learning. The teachers involved, however, are enthusiastic and have benefited from support from staff at Ilderton School.

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

- Make better use of assessment in lessons in order to accelerate pupils' progress and raise standards— inadequate progress

Leadership and management

The school has not made sufficient progress in dealing with the significant shortcomings in this area. This is principally because the governing body has not accepted the existence of many of the school's weaknesses. It has spent, and continues to spend, significant time and energy contesting the outcomes of the February inspection, including through a letter to parents in May, as well as strongly disputing reasonable suggestions and recommendations from the LA. The acting headteacher is understandably frustrated by this. The governing body is not providing suitable challenge and support for the school or focusing on the pressing need to improve the school now for the benefit of the pupils. Consequently, the management arrangements for next school year remain very uncertain and, as a result, there is no suitable action plan to deal with the school's weaknesses over time. Governors do have the interests of the school and community at heart but their key responsibility to ensure that these matters are resolved is not fulfilled.

Nevertheless, the part-time acting headteacher's good leadership has brought about a number of early improvements, including a significant rise in staff morale and better school self-evaluation. However, these are limited, having begun only recently. Other senior staff are loyal and supportive but need further training and development to fulfil their roles fully effectively. Members of the teaching and support staff recognise the weaknesses and inconsistencies in the school and are very keen to work together, and with staff from Ilderton School, to make the necessary improvements. They are desperate to have the consistent leadership, clear planning and support which would enable this. However, there remains significant uncertainty about whether the relationship between the schools will develop into the more formal 'hard' federation proposed by the LA, with governance provided by an Interim Executive Board (IEB), which could assure the longer term future leadership of the school.

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

- Improve the quality of monitoring and self-evaluation to provide a more accurate picture of teaching, learning, standards and achievement – inadequate progress

- Ensure that the new development plan is implemented effectively to quicken the pace of improvement – inadequate progress

External support

The LA is providing good support to the school. It has produced a suitable statement of action which, in a difficult set of circumstances, has enabled or supported the improvements which have taken place. The link adviser provides strong and valuable support but finds the uncertainty about next term difficult and frustrating. The federation is starting to have a positive impact. LA consultants are beginning to work effectively alongside teachers, as recently they have become able to gain appropriate access to the school. The LA intended to work in partnership with the governing body in seeking improvement, not wanting to assert its powers over-zealously or undiplomatically. However, it has now prudently placed two of its representatives on the governing body and is seeking the establishment of the IEB to avoid the current impasse.

Main Judgements

Progress since being subject to special measures – inadequate

Newly qualified teachers may not be appointed.

The school continues to require special measures.

Priorities for further improvement

- Ensure the school has appropriate and sustainable senior management and governance arrangements to ensure it has the capacity to improve much more quickly
- Put in place an appropriate strategic plan covering a suitable timescale and ensure that progress is monitored and evaluated rigorously
- Make sure systems are in place to ensure pupils' progress is properly tracked, suitable targets are set and appropriately challenging work is consistently set for the pupils

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the chair of the Board of Governors and Director of Children's Services for Southwark.

Yours sincerely

Robin Hammerton
HM Inspector