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Ms Susan Mortimer
The Headteacher
Rose Hill Primary School
The Oval
Oxford
OX4 4SF

Dear Ms Mortimer

SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF ROSE HILL PRIMARY SCHOOL

Following my visit to your school on 19 and 20 November 2007, 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 January 2007. The monitoring inspection report is attached and the main judgements are set out below.

Progress since being subject to special measures – satisfactory

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – good

Newly qualified teachers may not be appointed.

This letter and monitoring inspection report 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.

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

Yours sincerely

Catherine Munt
H M Inspector

SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING OF ROSE HILL PRIMARY SCHOOL

Report from the second monitoring inspection: 20 and 21 November 2007

Evidence

The inspector observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, a governor and the teachers responsible for special educational needs, the intensive support programme (ISP) and the new reading intervention programme. As the school had previously arranged a local authority inspection of science during the two days of this inspection, HMI agreed to work with the timetables which had been developed. Consequently, much of the teaching seen was in science lessons, although intervention work in English in Key Stage 2 and the teaching of phonics in Key Stage 1 were also observed. In addition, the Foundation Stage classrooms were visited during their fruit and milk sessions and a session of creative writing, run by staff from The Oxford Playhouse, was visited.

Context

Procedures to make a formal application for Fresh Start status have begun. Seven teachers new to the school and three other support staff have taken up post this term. The role of deputy head has been advertised but no appointment made.

Achievement and standards

In science lessons, much of the pupils' work was close to the expected levels in Years 1, 3, 4 and 5 but was considerably below the expected levels in Years 2 and 6. However, the recording of work in the Year 5 books is poor and reflects this cohort's exceptionally low standards in literacy. Some pupils in this year group are working at a similar level to Year 2 pupils on the commercial phonics programme introduced in September.

Data show that the majority of the pupils who are engaged in the phonics programme are making consistent progress in their word building skills and some have made rapid strides in reading fluency. Work in the sample of books from each class showed that standards in literacy are continuing to improve across the school, although they are still lower than is desirable. In most classes, able pupils are making more rapid progress in their writing skills than their peers. While this indicates that they are benefiting from improvements in the teaching of literacy it also highlights the amount of underachievement within this group in the past. Pupils in all classes are more confident than before when speaking and reading aloud. This is due to the greater number of opportunities being presented to them in many lessons to articulate their thinking. For example, short, interesting activities at the start of lessons, such as discussing with a partner which of three items is the odd man out, are developing pupils' reasoning skills and are having a positive impact on their confidence to express an opinion.

Much of the mathematics in the pupils' books was close to the standard expected for the age groups in Key Stage 1 and for more able pupils in Years 3 and 4. The work of older pupils was considerably lower than expected in most books. The quality and

presentation of work is better in those year groups where the size of the grids allows pupils to write one digit in each square. Pupils who have a poorly developed sense of place value find it difficult to record accurately in the very small squares used in some classes. This inhibits progress unnecessarily.

The school's initial focus on improving provision for literacy, followed by focused input on mathematics, is reflected in the level of improvement apparent in these subjects. Its decision to focus now on the improvements required in science is timely. While a number of staff devised suitable activities to explore scientific concepts and evaluated their impact on the pupils' learning rigorously, a few did not. Weaknesses in the planning and delivery of science at the end of Key Stage 1 are limiting the pupils' development of skills and knowledge. Consequently, their progress in science is impeded.

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

Personal development and well-being

Enabling pupils to play an extensive, active and positive role in school life was not reviewed on this visit.

Pupils are developing important social skills, such as co-operation and self-control that contribute positively to their future economic well-being. The implementation of the ISP programme has increased the regularity with which pupils are offered a range of effective opportunities to work in teams, to share equipment and to collaborate with partners. The more consistent use of the agreed behaviour strategies is helping the pupils to develop the skill of making good choices and of accepting that poor choices have negative consequences. While behaviour in lessons and around the school was good overall, there are still situations where individuals lose self control and it is important that all staff give the same messages in all circumstances so that good choosing becomes the norm.

Strategies to improve attendance are beginning to have a positive impact on the attitudes of the pupils. The squeals of delight in a Year 1 science lesson, the zest with which Year 3 pupils set about their experiments and the huge smiles as children greeted their teachers on Monday morning all attest to the increased pleasure taken by the children in their learning. They are aware that they need to attend regularly in order to make good progress in their learning. The majority are happy to be in school and they are increasingly on time for the start of the day. Authorised absence dropped by 1.2 % last year and attendance figures improved by the same amount, giving a figure of 93.9%. However, the amount of unauthorised absence did not reduce last year and was double the national figure. The school is working with parents to reduce this and a helpful leaflet has been sent to each family.

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 – no judgement
- Take rigorous steps to improve attendance – satisfactory

Quality of provision

Great improvements have been made in the quality of teaching. This is due to the consistent and effective support provided by the senior leadership team and the School Improvement Advisory Teachers, and because staff are taking good account of this advice and support. In a quarter of the lessons teaching was outstanding and it was good or better in over a half. Most of the remainder was satisfactory. A very small amount of unsatisfactory teaching and learning was the result of the ineffective science planning. In the best lessons the teachers' good knowledge, enthusiasm, and well focused questioning built up the pupils' self-esteem and developed their skills and understanding effectively. Some well-marked and well-presented work in books showed the positive impact of training in literacy. Effective cross-curricular literacy links were seen in a Year 1 science lesson.

Staff have worked hard to develop a range of effective strategies to engage all pupils. Assessment is developing well and is more accurate than before. This has enabled the school to have a much clearer picture of what pupils' requirements are and has had a significant impact on the number identified with additional needs. Teachers and senior leaders are monitoring the challenging targets that are set and revised regularly. Consequently, pupils know where they are and what to do to improve, particularly in literacy and mathematics. Rightly, the school has identified science as the next focus for development.

New teaching and support staff have brought a range of strengths and enthusiasm to school and existing staff continue to give their support willingly. An indicator of the strength of staff belief in school is seen in the transformation of previously dull and dreary rooms and teaching areas. These are now bright and well organised with vibrant displays. This gives out a strong message about the school's commitment to improving the learning environment. It also signifies that children and adults are valued. That the accommodation was painted by staff and their families is a credit to everyone involved. The pivotal role of teaching assistants in developing the learning environment is noted by the school.

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 – good

Leadership and management

Outstanding leadership from the headteacher continues to enthuse and inspire staff and this plays a considerable part in the good progress that has been made since last inspection visit. The school realises that there is still a great deal requiring development or improvement. Leadership and management are strengthened by the effective work of senior leaders who take their responsibilities seriously. Regular and systematic monitoring is ensuring that the leadership team has a clear idea of what is effective and where additional support is required in curriculum or in developing teaching skills.

Teachers with responsibility for key areas are well informed and feel well supported by the local authority (LA). Many praised the support that they had received from SIAT staff. The Raising Attainment Plans are well thought out and have the potential to improve standards within a suitable time frame. All of the recent intervention programmes have been introduced thoroughly, enabling staff to implement them effectively. Both of the reading and writing sessions were well led; one, by a teaching assistant and one by a class teacher.

Governors are exceptionally well informed and are working effectively with the senior leaders and the LA to support and guide the school through this challenging time. The LA highlighted their important contribution to the Fresh Start bid process.

No areas for improvement were identified by the inspection in January 2007.

External support

The LA continues to provide a good level of well-co-ordinated and timely support for the staff and governors. This includes the provision of effective School Improvement Advisory Teachers and the provision of an additional day a week from special needs advisory staff.

Priorities for further improvement

- Developing the science curriculum at Key Stage 1
- Building on the high quality teaching practices present in the school