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13 November 2007

Ms Sophie Allen
Headteacher
Stonebridge Primary School
Shakespeare Avenue
London
NW10 8NG

Dear Ms Allen

**SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF STONEBRIDGE
PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Following my visit to your school on 6 and 7 November 2007, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the fourth monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures in June 2006. The monitoring inspection report is attached and the main judgements are set out below.

Progress since being subject to special measures – *good*

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – *satisfactory*

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 School Improvement Services for Brent.

Yours sincerely

Jane Wotherspoon
H M Inspector

SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING OF STONEBRIDGE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Report from the fourth monitoring inspection: 6 and 7 November 2007

Evidence

I observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, senior leadership team, the chair of governors, and a representative from the local authority (LA). I spoke informally with other staff and pupils during the visit.

Context

In response to the growing need for school places in the local community, and in negotiation with the LA, the school agreed to admit additional pupils into the Reception year in September. This is the first step in a phased development to change from one to two forms of entry. In order to accommodate this increase, the LA funded building work to the Foundation Stage area. The LA is committed to supporting the school financially with upgrading and refurbishment to accommodate the proposed changes until the long-term plan to rebuild the school is realised. There have been several staff changes: three full-time teachers, two in the Foundation Stage, and one part-time have joined the school, replacing two teachers who left and one who now works part-time. Three support staff have left and six have joined the school. A trainee social worker, a trainee teaching assistant and a teacher in training to become a reading recovery teacher have all been placed at the school. As well as the new intake of Nursery and additional Reception children, 9 pupils left and 20 joined the school in September, reflecting the constant movement of pupils in and out of the local area.

Achievement and standards

Standards remain too low. The school's own data shows a disproportionate number of pupils in each year group are not working at the levels expected for their age. Ambitious targets have been set for the end of the year based on pupils making better than expected progress. This will be a significant challenge that requires well focused and targeted teaching. In lessons, progress is variable because of the remaining inconsistencies in the teaching. The teachers differ in the precision with which they plan and prepare tasks at an appropriate level for the wide range of abilities and learning needs found in all classes. The quality of work in pupils' books continues to improve, including its presentation, following the implementation of the marking and presentation policy. However, the challenge remains to ensure that all pupils make faster progress and sustain it consistently from year to year.

Figures from national assessments in 2007, as yet unvalidated, indicate positive signs of improvement on previous years in Year 2. Results are very close to the LA average in reading and writing and match it in mathematics. The gap between the school and national figures is narrowing. Writing results, in particular, have improved significantly in the last two years. Pupils with learning difficulties and those who speak English as an additional language did well in comparison with their peers nationally. However, boys' results were much lower than the girls' in all three areas

and few pupils gained higher levels. Results in Year 6 fell again in English, with only a half of pupils reaching the levels expected for their age. This is significantly below the national figures and there is much to do to close the gap. Writing is a significant weakness. Results rose slightly in mathematics and showed a good increase in science to be close to the LA average. Boys did particularly poorly in English but better than girls in science.

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

- Raise the achievement of all pupils, especially average and lower attaining – *satisfactory*

Personal development and well-being

Behaviour in class and around the school is generally good. Most pupils conform to the school's expectations. The small number who present challenging behaviour are supported and dealt with appropriately. There have been two fixed-term exclusions for the same pupil this term. Pupils' attitudes are positive. Generally they are happy at school. They are polite and friendly to visitors. Attendance rates are improving as a result of support from the education welfare service and the robust approach of the headteacher to following up pupils' absences. The learning environment continues to improve, both in classes and in general areas of the school. Displays around the school celebrate pupils' achievements, are well presented, and set clear expectations for pupils' learning.

Quality of provision

Although there has been further progress towards consistently satisfactory teaching, some elements need further improvement to ensure that pupils can make faster progress. Planning formats are standard across the school and continually under review. However, work is not always pitched at the right level, especially to challenge those pupils capable of achieving more. There is more to do to ensure that those with learning difficulties and those learning English as an additional language have appropriate support and tasks. The deployment of teaching assistants and learning support assistants is an issue in some classes. The large number of additional staff in lessons places a high demand on class teachers to prepare, organise and manage these additional resources to maximise their contribution to pupils' learning. At times, teachers do not give clear enough guidance about how pupils should be supported and what pupils are expected to gain from the support. Occasionally, assistants do not follow the instructions provided to complete tasks with pupils in the way that the teacher has planned.

Inconsistencies in the quality of daily evaluations remain, and in the use of that information to adapt planned tasks from day to day. There is scope for formalising systems for teaching assistants to contribute to daily evaluations. Some simple, but effective, strategies for support staff to feed back on what pupils have achieved are used in at least one class. This good practice could be spread more widely to ensure that assistants share their valuable knowledge of the progress pupils have made or the problems they have encountered. Well established systems for making observations on children in the Foundation Stage could be usefully adapted. The quality of teachers' marking is improving. It is more regular and clearly reflects the

lessons' objectives but does not identify what pupils need to do to improve. This is a missed opportunity to set clear next steps in pupils' learning, particularly in writing. The need for further work on moderating and levelling samples of pupils' writing has been recognised and is planned for later this term.

Further good improvements have been made to the provision in the Foundation Stage. The new Foundation Stage leader has made several positive changes to planning, assessment and organisation. In part, this is in response to the increase in numbers of children and the need to reorganise the space available. The increase in staff has necessitated greater clarity in staff roles and tighter planning at key times of the day. Significant improvements to the environment provide children with a good range of interesting and stimulating activities. The balance between adult focused and child-led activities has been retained. I observed examples of good quality interaction from adults and timely engagement with children's play. Staff have used initial assessments to group children so that they can modify focused tasks according to children's needs and responses. Observations of children engaged in a variety of tasks are being collated to provide a picture of each child as they learn and develop. Close observations of children's responses to focused tasks are also recorded and the next steps in learning are identified and used when planning subsequent activities. These changes are a positive step forward and now need to become consolidated in practice.

Data shows the progress of pupils in booster and catch up programmes is generally good. The school has begun to monitor formally the quality of support for pupils with learning difficulties in classes using a helpful checklist. However, the monitoring does not focus enough on the impact of the support on pupils' learning nor on the links between individual education plans (IEPs) and class activities. Weaknesses in IEPs and their variable quality have been identified but not followed up with sufficient rigour.

Building well on systems started by the headteacher, the school's new co-ordinator for ethnic minority achievement has ensured all staff now have a clear picture of the levels of language acquisition and the languages spoken by pupils in their class. The many languages spoken by teaching and support staff are drawn upon when required to provide support for pupils new to the school and translations for their families. This gives a positive message to the community of their value in the school. Induction procedures for new pupils are becoming formalised. The profile of different cultures and languages has been raised considerably through displays around the school and gives a strong message to pupils about celebrating cultural differences. The LA consultant gives training, guidance and support for staff on meeting the needs of pupils new to English. Strategies such as paired work and hot seating are more evident and the focus on practising key vocabulary is more common place in lessons. Teaching assistants and support staff have not yet benefited from specific training and further work is needed to ensure that there are sufficient resources such as dual language books.

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

- Ensure that the quality of teaching is at least satisfactory across the school and share the best practice more effectively – *satisfactory*

- Improve the quality of the curriculum and management in the Foundation Stage – *good*

Leadership and management

The headteacher's good leadership sets clear direction for the school's improvement. The focus on improving teaching and raising standards through better progress is strong. She is empowering the members of the senior leadership team to develop their roles so that they are better able to support her efforts. Senior leaders have a clearer understanding of whole school issues and are working together as a team, taking a greater role in monitoring the quality of the school's provision and in evaluating the impact of the actions that have been taken. There is a strong sense that this team is moving nearer to the point of being able to sustain improvements without the high levels of support from the LA. Self-evaluation is increasingly accurate, as are judgements on the quality of teaching. Formal monitoring of lessons is regular and provides helpful feedback, as well as enabling staff to have targeted support both from within school and from LA consultants. Termly meetings between the headteacher and staff on the progress of individuals emphasises the need for all pupils to be making better progress. The groundwork has been laid for a policy on teaching and learning through regular training but this has not been formalised yet.

The school's improvement plan is under constant review. Based largely on the areas for development from the inspection of June 2006 and issues raised at subsequent monitoring visits, the school is also beginning to identify additional aspects of its work that need to be improved. There is an increasing recognition from governors of the need to look beyond the improvements required to remove the school from special measures and to look further ahead to long term developments. Governors continue to extend their expertise and develop individual roles and responsibilities. They are well organised, work efficiently through the committee structure, and increasingly hold the school to account for the quality of its provision.

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

- Devise and implement a school improvement plan – *satisfactory*

External support

The high level of support on all fronts is gradually reducing. It is, rightly, focused on supporting the development of senior leadership roles to strengthen the capacity of the school to stand alone. Consultants continue to give targeted support for data analysis, the English as an additional language project, the management of support for pupils with learning difficulties and the leadership of the Foundation Stage.

Priorities for further improvement

- Ensure that teacher's planning is sharper to take account of the different learning needs of individuals and groups of pupils, including those with learning difficulties, those speaking English as an additional language and potentially higher attaining pupils.
- Develop further the roles of teaching assistants in supporting groups of pupils and ensure that teachers make the best use of this valuable resource.