

28 February 2008

Mr S Hanscombe
Headteacher
Mill Hill Community Primary School
Crosby Road
Northallerton
North Yorkshire
DL6 1AE

Dear Mr Hanscombe

**SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF MILL HILL
COMMUNITY PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Following my visit to your school on 27 February 2008, 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 May 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 only be appointed with the agreement of the lead inspector.

This letter and monitoring inspection report will be posted on the Ofsted website.

I am copying this letter and the monitoring inspection report to the Secretary of State, the chair of governors and the Corporate Director for Children and Young People's Services for North Yorkshire.

Yours sincerely

Mark Wilson
Lead Inspector

SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING OF MILL HILL COMMUNITY PRIMARY SCHOOL

Report from the second monitoring inspection: 27 February 2008

Evidence

The inspector observed some of the school's work, scrutinised documents and spoke with key staff including the headteacher and deputy headteacher. In addition, discussions were held with pupils, governors, representatives from the local authority (LA) and a small number of parents. A meeting was also held with the previous acting headteacher.

The main focus of this monitoring visit was to establish what progress had been made in relation to one specific area for improvement relating to the stability of leadership and management. The other areas for improvement identified in the May 2007 inspection were not inspected.

Context

The acting headteacher and deputy headteacher present at the last monitoring visit have now left as planned. A new permanent, full-time headteacher and deputy headteacher took up their posts in January 2008. A new teacher for one of the Year 3/4 classes has also been appointed and took up position in February. Two additional governors have also been appointed. The school's long-term financial status remains fragile and the school faces staffing reorganisation to rectify this situation. A three-year financial plan is now in place and the LA has approved the budget.

Achievement and standards

This aspect was not a focus of the monitoring visit. Indications are that the actions taken to raise achievement and standards observed at the last monitoring visit are continuing to help improve pupils' progress.

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

- Raise achievement and standards in English, mathematics and science – not evaluated

Personal development and well-being

The personal development and well-being of the pupils was not a focus of this inspection. However, as at the last monitoring visit, pupils feel safe, enjoy coming to school and are happy to learn. Most pupils behave well in lessons and speak favourably of the clear rewards, sanctions and strategies now in place to further improve behaviour.

Quality of provision

The quality of provision was not a main focus of this monitoring visit. However, within a short time of being in school the headteacher has evaluated the quality of the provision in terms of its strengths and areas to develop. A clear focus remains on improving the curriculum and the quality of teaching and learning.

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

- Improve teaching, particularly by raising the level of challenge, especially for the more able pupils – not evaluated

Leadership and management

A successful handover from the acting headteacher has allowed the new headteacher and deputy headteacher to quickly establish their positions. They have provided the first permanent leadership in the school for a long time, quickly developing an effective working relationship between themselves, staff and pupils. All involved with the school welcome the sense of permanence they have brought.

Within days of taking up his post the headteacher reviewed the work of the school and this has led, for example, to changes in the school day so that time is now used better for teaching and learning. Improvement planning has been developed to focus on what the school needs over the next few years rather than on a term-by-term basis. A clear commitment has been made to the professional development of staff. This is focused on improving teaching and learning; involving, for example, teachers visiting partnership schools to share and observe good practice.

This improved stability provided by the senior leadership has meant subject leaders in English, mathematics and science are now feeling more empowered to take on responsibility. Support from the LA and partnership schools has helped clarify leaders' roles so they are clear what actions they need to take to ensure improvement. Overall, these subject leaders are now more confident in monitoring their area of responsibility. They realise that other colleagues will need to be held more to account to ensure that improvement continues. However, leadership and management in information and communication technology have not yet improved enough.

Work on improving governance is continuing. Governors have received training on their roles and responsibilities and they are becoming more strategically involved in the management of the school. The headteacher and deputy headteacher have helped the governing body in redesigning the committee structure to provide more rigour in the monitoring of progress made by the school. Key governors now attend review meetings and are starting to hold the school more to account. However, it is too early for the full impact of these changes to be felt. Governors are helping to revise the staffing structure of the school and understand the steps needed to deal with the fragile financial situation. Support and challenge by governors linked, for example, to subjects such as numeracy and literacy has improved.

The headteacher understands what work there is to do, after such a turbulent past, to ensure that the school has a clear strategic direction, is truly accountable for its performance and has secure leadership and management at all levels. Improving the curriculum is seen as a clear priority as is ensuring rigorous high quality professional standards across all areas of the school. The school is very keen to work more closely with parents. Recently introduced whole-class assemblies are proving very popular with parents and pupils alike.

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

- Ensure long-term stability in leadership and management in order to provide a secure foundation for improvement – good

External support

The LA continues to provide good support for the school. The new headteacher has been supported well to help him settle in quickly. His professional development needs have been assessed and opportunities for additional training have been made available. Considerations have also been given as to the support the new deputy headteacher may require. Through the school improvement partner and LA advisers support for subject leaders and teachers in the Foundation Stage has continued.

Priorities for further improvement

- The issues identified in the inspection of May 2007 and the first monitoring visit remain the school's main priorities.