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19 March 2008

Mrs Liz Hills
The Executive Headteacher
Eveline Lowe Primary School
Marlborough Grove
London
SE1 5JT

Dear Mrs Hills

SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF EVELINE LOWE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Following my visit with Jo Curd, Additional Inspector, to your school on 12 and 13 March 2008, 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 February 2007. The monitoring inspection report is attached and the main judgements are set out below.

Progress since being subject to special measures – inadequate; although the federation structure is now fully operational, providing a greatly improved basis for the future, it has had little impact so far on improving the quality of teaching and learning, which remains much too low.

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – inadequate; the early progress identified in November 2007 has not been sustained.

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 the Board of Governors and Director of Children's Services for Southwark.

Yours sincerely

Robin Hammerton
HM Inspector

SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING OF EVELINE LOWE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Report from the third monitoring inspection: 12 and 13 March 2008

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met or spoke with the executive headteacher, members of staff, pupils, the chair of governors and two senior representatives of the local authority (LA).

Context

At the time of the last monitoring inspection, the school had just entered into full federation with a nearby primary school. The federation management structure, which was then under consultation, was implemented on 1 January 2008. The principal and the two vice-principals, who came originally from the other school in the federation, make up the senior leadership team (SLT).

Achievement and standards

The school is now gathering much fuller, more reliable information about the progress of its pupils from Year 1 upwards. This data shows that while there are some patchy improvements, for example in writing, overall standards and progress remain very low for all groups and have not improved sufficiently since the last monitoring inspection. The best rates of progress are in Years 5 and 6. The school has limited data about the current achievement of children in the Foundation Stage. Standards in the Nursery and Reception are well below national expectations, which reflects the children's overall attainment on entry.

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

- Raise achievement in English, mathematics and science – inadequate.

Personal development and well-being

Pupils are generally polite, articulate and keen to learn. Relationships continue to be good and most pupils are happy in school. They are loyal to their school and particularly enjoy the garden and musical activities. Due to a more consistent approach, and the high expectations of staff in this area, behaviour is generally very good. When introductions to lessons are too long or tasks are insufficiently engaging, some pupils become restless and bored. Occasionally, unnecessary rebukes from teachers lead to pupils' frustration, resignation or resentment rather than re-engagement or improved attitudes. The rate of attendance continues to be well below national and local averages.

Quality of provision

Staff are generally hard working and committed, caring for their pupils well. However, the quality of teaching and learning in eight out of thirteen lessons

observed by inspectors was inadequate, with the better teaching generally being in the older classes. The early signs of improvement in the use of assessment data by teachers, identified at the last monitoring inspection, have not been continued effectively. As a result, the work set in lessons is too often mundane and insufficiently challenging for most pupils, but is sometimes too difficult for those who are lower attaining. However, the introduction of a new teaching approach to literacy provides a better structure in that subject, though expectations of the pupils remain too low. Targets for future learning, which have been introduced in English and mathematics, are known to pupils but not yet having sufficient impact on progress. Teaching assistants are too often underused in lessons, without clearly enough targeted work to do. There continue to be too few opportunities in lessons and assemblies for pupils' spiritual or cultural development. Support for pupils whose first language is not English is being developed but this is at an early stage with some pupils' needs not fully identified.

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

Leadership and management

With support from the LA, the SLT has quickly established appropriate federation management systems. These are at an early stage of implementation but provide a good basis for the future. The SLT provides positive, motivating leadership at a testing time for staff. Its members are leading two schools at very different development points, with the needs of Eveline Lowe School being newer to them and less familiar. Although the links between the schools are constructive, this puts significant pressure on the time and energy of SLT members. Whilst the federation structure is essentially sound and their work is good, by themselves, they do not have sufficient capacity to ensure the significant and rapid improvements needed to improve teaching, learning and standards.

The role of the assistant vice-principal, who is not in the SLT, is too limited and contributes little to improving teaching and standards. Many of his tasks could be carried out by less senior staff. Middle managers are developing in their new roles, which are appropriate, but understandably have much still to learn. Some of the key tasks they need to undertake, such as working alongside colleagues in classes to improve practice, are not clearly enough identified for them. These issues add to the lack of management capacity.

In turn, the lack of capacity leads to some weaknesses in self-evaluation. For example, much emphasis is placed on monitoring and supporting teachers' planning with too little focus on what actually happens in lessons. The lesson observations which have been carried out identify correctly many areas needing improvement but have underestimated the seriousness of some. This has also leads to too little direct management action to improve teaching and learning.

The governing body continues to be supportive and shrewd, rightly seeking to find ways by which it can monitor the school more rigorously and actively.

Progress on the area 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 overall, although the monitoring of standards has improved well.

Progress on the area for improvement identified in the monitoring inspection in November 2007:

- Ensure that the effectiveness of the federation management structure is regularly evaluated and that it successfully brings about improvement across the school – inadequate

External support

The experienced LA senior adviser attached to the school continues to provide much good practical support and advice, especially in improving management systems. However, the LA has not noted clearly enough the full extent of the inadequacies in teaching and learning and has therefore not taken sufficient action to help the school deal with them. The incisive formal observations on the school's progress provided by the school improvement partner before the last monitoring inspection, which were a very useful support to the school's own self-evaluation, have not been added to since then. The effectiveness of the federation's management structure, so far, in promoting improvement has not been adequately assessed.

Priorities for further improvement

- Improve significantly the quality of teaching and learning across the school (this will become a further additional area for improvement and will be specifically evaluated at the next monitoring inspection under the provision section).
- Add to and build quickly the capacity of the school's leadership team at all levels (this will be evaluated at the next monitoring inspection as part of the existing area for improvement concerning the federation management structure).