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Ms Susan Mortimer
The Headteacher
Rose Hill Primary School
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Dear Ms Mortimer

SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF ROSE HILL PRIMARY SCHOOL

Following my visit to your school on 13 and 14 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 January 2007. 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 – good

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 third monitoring inspection: 13 and 14 March 2008

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and work books and met with the headteacher, the manager of the Children's Centre, external partners, groups of pupils, school and local authority teachers and the office staff.

Context

The decision to implement Fresh Start status has been delayed and the school is in the process of resubmitting the bid. This has been a great disappointment to the school community in view of the good progress it has made over time. One teacher and one member of the administrative team have left since the last monitoring visit. The vacancy in the office is unfilled. The school, rightly, is reviewing the organisation of the school office to improve provision and efficiency.

Achievement and standards

In 2007 standards in the national tests remained well below those for schools nationally at both key stages. However, the proportion of pupils attaining the expected levels improved in all subjects. Results for reading at Key Stage 1 and for English at Key Stage 2 were average. This shows the positive impact of the new reading and writing scheme and of the school's focus on delivering the literacy strategy more systematically this year. The number of pupils gaining the higher level in reading and writing at Key Stage 1 was in line with the national average. At Key Stage 2, the points scored for English and science were higher than in previous years. Although results in mathematics did not show an improvement at Levels 4 and 5, no pupils were below Level 3.

Pupils with special educational needs who find learning difficult made most progress last year and their results were better than those for similar groups nationally at both Key Stages. The effective leadership of the special needs co-ordinator has resulted in earlier and more accurate identification of pupils' needs and the systematic teaching of basic skills across all year groups.

National data support the school's judgement that pupils currently in Year 5 have the most ground to make up in all core subjects. Consequently, their predicted targets, while lower than those for 2007, represent an extreme challenge. RAISEonline projections indicate that results will be in the bottom quartile next year.

Generally, standards at Key Stage 2 remain below the expected levels in mathematics. The range of work in most pupils' books has widened showing the impact of national strategy planning. While presentation remains good in several classes and is improving in Year 6, there are still too many books where no comment is made on work which is poorly set out. In particular, place value is not being reinforced and this impedes learning.

In English, the rate at which pupils are progressing in their learning has accelerated and in several classes pupils are operating at the level expected for their ages. For example, in Year 4, pupils were confident and articulate when devising and acting their interpretations of scenes from 'the Tempest'. Their self-scribed production notes showed good organisational and secretarial skills. This work, linked most successfully to other topics in art, maths, RE, design technology, and history, has fired the pupils' imaginations and has created a more meaningful learning environment for them. In the Foundation Stage classes, children engaged fully in storytelling activities, speaking in character and using their imaginations to create and record further journeys on the magic carpet. They talked enthusiastically about the adventures of the class bear and involved their parents by taking the bear home for the night then reporting on what they had done. In both year groups, and in a successful Year 1 mathematics lesson, where pupils were working out how many candles the bear had blown out over the first six years of his life, the teachers' provision of a wider context for learning and using basic skills, has engaged the pupils' interest resulting in more rapid and effective progress.

Planning has improved in science due to effective support from Local Authority staff. However, it is too soon to judge the impact of this on the pupils' acquisition of skills and knowledge.

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

The appointment of the learning monitor has been most effective in improving attendance and time keeping, and in bringing the importance of punctuality to the notice of the parents. Attendance is now closer to the national average. The re-invigorated School Council is encouraging responsibility and decision making and is well respected by the other children. In particular, pupils say the adults are listening to them and are taking their opinions seriously.

Positive attitudes were evident in all lessons and pupils were clearly enjoying the range of exciting and challenging work. For example, pupils in Year 1 enthusiastically 'journeyed through the jungle', imagining and enjoying the sounds and atmosphere of the exotic animals, while work based on Matisse tapped into hitherto unexpected skills and talents in a Year 6 art lesson. Children report that they are particularly enjoying the wide range of clubs and activities on offer to them at lunch time and after school.

The atmosphere around the school is quiet and calm and is enhanced by the high quality of the displays of children's work. The use of the 'Art Room', an art-as-therapy project run by a charity, is helping children to develop their creativity and fosters their self esteem effectively. The partnership that the school has developed with this charity has had a hugely beneficial effect in terms of staff and pupil development and is a very good example of the school's excellent links with external partners.

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 – good
- Take rigorous steps to improve attendance – good

Quality of provision

The quality of provision has improved since the last monitoring visit. The majority of teaching seen was good and two lessons were outstanding. Teachers have been diligent in addressing the weaknesses which were previously identified and are more reflective in their practice. Children report that they find lessons exciting and enjoy coming to school. Planning is now more effectively linked to accurate assessment of the children's current standards. The pace of lessons is brisk enabling classes to cover sufficient ground in each session. Consequently standards are beginning to rise. Teachers are using questioning more effectively than before, developing children's thinking skills by encouraging them to explain their understanding more coherently. Target setting is now ensuring that all pupils know what it is that they have to do to improve the standard of their work. The curriculum is becoming more creative and effective links are being made across and between subjects in several classes. This is making learning more fun and teaching more enjoyable. Although marking has improved it is not yet consistent across all year groups or classes. Local Authority advisers have supported teachers well, as is evident in the improvements in recording in Year 2 science books.

In the Foundation Stage, the physical changes to the environment have now been matched by improved provision. Under the inspiring guidance of the Foundation Stage leader, teaching skills have developed, a genuine team spirit has emerged and as a consequence pupils are making good progress in their learning. The team is aware that there are still areas that are under-resourced, for example outside play, but there are appropriate plans to address this as funds permit.

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

The headteacher continues to lead and guide the school most effectively with calm authority. Under her tutelage all members of staff have developed their teaching and management skills. They now feel involved with the progress which the school is making on its journey and this has created the impetus for further improvement which is now evident.

Middle managers are assuming responsibility for standards in their areas and are taking the initiative by suggesting further improvements. Their involvement with the wider community has increased and in turn this has improved their confidence and pride in the school. Effective links with the Children's Centre are developing but there is still room for increased collaboration and for greater governor involvement.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in January 2007:
none identified

External support

Members of the local authority staff continue to support the school effectively. They have enabled classes to be covered, thus contributing considerably to the progress that the pupils are making. By working alongside middle managers they are developing the capacity of the school significantly. Their roles for the next academic year will be considered shortly.