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25 June 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 Peter McGregor, Additional Inspector, to your school on 18 and 19 June 2008, 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 February 2007. The monitoring inspection report is attached and the main judgements are set out below.

Progress since being subject to special measures – inadequate. Very significant weaknesses remain and the longer term management arrangements for the federation are too uncertain.

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – inadequate, though there have been some positive changes as a result of the increased capacity within the senior leadership team.

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

Report from the fourth monitoring inspection: 18 and 19 June 2008

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work and scrutinised documents and pupils' written work. They met with the principal, the vice principals, members of staff, pupils and the chair of governors. Discussions were held with two representatives of the local authority (LA).

Context

Since the last monitoring inspection, two new temporary vice principals have been appointed, specifically to work at Eveline Lowe, thereby increasing the school's leadership and management capacity. The assistant vice principal is on sabbatical leave.

Achievement and standards

The school has good, accurate systems for assessing and tracking all pupils' achievement. These, with other inspection evidence, show that standards and progress remain inconsistent across the school and are, overall, low for all groups of pupils in the core subjects. Again, there has been insufficient improvement since the previous monitoring inspection. Standards in mathematics are, however, generally higher than those in English. Standards in writing are extremely low. Pupils' letter formation and handwriting is weak, with little consistency in practice throughout the school. Recognising this, the school has very recently introduced a new handwriting policy. Too few pupils are sufficiently developing skills in structuring or punctuating their written work.

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

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

Personal development and well-being

Attendance has improved substantially this term following the introduction of better systems. Pupils continue to have loyal and positive attitudes to school, showing a desire to learn. In lessons and assemblies, their behaviour is very good and supportive of each other, leading to a clear sense of community. For example, pupils are genuinely appreciative when others receive certificates for good work. The quality of singing together in assemblies is good, as was the performance of the brass band in a Key Stage 2 assembly. The school has begun to introduce better opportunities for spiritual reflection. However, behaviour outside of lessons has deteriorated. During break and lunch periods, instances of aggressive attitudes and conduct around the large upper school site sometimes go unchecked, leading to a considerable degree of unhappiness on the part of pupils. Pupils have few opportunities to take on responsibilities, other than through membership of the school council.

Quality of provision

The quality of teaching and learning, a specific focus of this visit, has not improved overall since the last monitoring inspection. More than half of the lessons observed by inspectors were inadequate. There were, however, a few good lessons, in particular classes throughout the school. Generally, teachers speak for too long when pupils are sitting on the carpet and during group work many pupils receive too little attention and their concentration wanders. Teachers' expectations remain too low and the pace of work and progress is slow. Plenary sessions are often brief and inconsequential and do not provide staff with the information they need to judge the learning and future needs of pupils. The system for tracking progress provides a clear picture of how each individual pupil is doing but this information is still not used sufficiently well to identify and then resolve underachievement. However, the mentoring work of teachers by senior staff has brought some change in teaching practice. For example, more use is being made in lessons of peer partners for pupils' discussion. This engages pupils better but has not significantly lifted the quality of learning.

Pupils are benefiting somewhat from teaching assistants working more closely with teachers. Teaching assistants have received minimal training, however, and so gaps in their expertise, and knowledge of school priorities, inhibit further progress.

The school provides a balanced curriculum. Regular planning meetings for staff in each year group bring about some consistency, although equality of opportunity is not always secured. In one case, for example, a Year 2 class went on an educational visit to the National Gallery but the other class in the year group was not planned to do the same. Pupils' cultural development is still not receiving its due emphasis. The curriculum for writing across the school provides insufficient opportunities for pupils to write at length in a range of genres. Expectations of how pupils might improve their writing are too low.

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.

Progress on the area for improvement identified in the monitoring inspection of March 2008:

- Improve significantly the quality of teaching and learning across the school – inadequate.

Leadership and management

After the recommendation at the last monitoring inspection to increase the capacity of the senior leadership team (SLT) two new temporary vice principals have been appointed. These new staff are highly committed, have appropriate job descriptions, and are fitting in well. The additional capacity they provide has enabled action and improvements in some areas, including attendance and links with parents. The principal maintains a clear focus on high standards and the need to improve, which the SLT members all share. All of them now have a mentoring role for staff covering

each year group. This has begun to bring about some changes in classroom practice, though it has not yet brought significant improvement in the quality of teaching or pupils' progress.

The increase in leadership capacity is, therefore, having a positive impact but is rendered less effective by two further factors. The first is that there is uncertainty about the future federation senior leadership structure and its affordability. The governing body, on the basis of the budgetary information available to it, has developed some carefully thought through proposals about this, and is negotiating with the LA about funding. The federation arrangement itself remains essentially sound; but it is of concern that several months into the federation, and with the shortfall in leadership capacity having been addressed, there is now further insecurity about the future. While this remains unresolved it is harder for the school to plan ahead with confidence. The second key factor is that the school improvement plan is no longer fit for purpose. This plan helped bring about some earlier improvements and greater consistency across the school. However, it now needs substantial revision. It is too limited in its scope, and not clear enough about what needs to be achieved, in both shorter and longer terms, who is responsible for what, or how success will be measured. It does not provide sufficient accountability for senior leaders or guide their work effectively. Nor does it reflect the current leadership arrangements.

The principal has been careful in recruiting new staff. Teachers new to the school this term have made a good start. The principal also evaluates the school thoroughly and has been helped in this by the additional management staff. Self-evaluation systems have improved and pupils' progress is monitored particularly well. However, although the weaknesses in teaching are known about and being worked on through the senior staff's mentoring work, the quality of teaching and learning has not improved as the school's evaluation, supported by the LA, suggests.

Constructive links continue to exist between the schools in the federation which support the further development of middle managers. However, these staff continue to have a limited impact due to their restricted experience. The governing body continues to work hard for the school.

Progress on the areas 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 – satisfactory, especially in respect of standards and achievement.

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 LA provides some useful practical advice and support through the work of the attached senior adviser. The work of consultants is valued by staff. However, the LA

has still not fully recognised the depth of the inadequacies in teaching and learning. It has not noted sufficiently that the continuing uncertainty about the federation's management structure and its funding is unsettling to the school and hinders its work. The report on the school provided to Ofsted by the LA for this inspection was too positive.

Priorities for further improvement

- As a matter of urgency, arrange the federation's permanent management structure so that the school has both the capacity and the stability it needs to improve.
- Revise significantly the school improvement plan, so that it provides a clear direction and promotes better accountability for the progress of the school.
- Improve the quality of pupils' writing.