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14 July 2008

Mr R Brading
The Headteacher
Hillbrook School
Hillbrook Road
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SW17 8SG

Dear Mr Brading

SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF HILLBROOK SCHOOL

Following my visit with Madeleine Gerard, Additional Inspector and Stephen Parker, Additional Inspector, to your school on 8 and 9 July 2008, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures in January 2008. The monitoring inspection report is attached and the main judgements are set out below.

Progress since being subject to special measures – 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 Director of Education for Wandsworth.

Yours sincerely

Alison Storey
H M Inspector

SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING OF HILLBROOK SCHOOL

Report from the first monitoring inspection: 8 and 9 July 2008

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and pupils' written work and met with the headteacher and associate headteacher, other staff, pupils, the chair of governors and a representative from the local authority (LA).

Context

The school's roll has increased slightly since the last inspection. Staffing has remained relatively stable. Two teachers have joined on short term contracts to cover maternity leaves and there has been a change of physical education (PE) specialist. The leadership and management structure has been reviewed and three new phase leader posts created. Five permanent members of staff have been recruited to middle management roles, including these new posts. They will take up post in September 2008. In March 2008 the school entered into a partnership, commissioned by the LA, with nearby Belleville Primary School. The headteacher of that school acts as associate headteacher and, with other members of his staff, supports the school for up to 4 days per week. A link has also been formed between the two chairs of governors.

Achievement and standards

There have been improvements in the standards reached at the end of all three key stages this year, due in part to the additional support in Reception, Year 2 and Year 6, funded by the LA.

Teacher assessments, moderated by the LA, show that children continue to progress well in the Foundation Stage. However, because they generally enter Nursery with low levels of skills, standards when they move to Year 1 are still below those expected for their age, particularly in communication, language and literacy. Standards in mathematical development have previously been low but are closer to average this year. Although the additional support in the Reception classes has targeted those children who speak English as an additional language, the school has not yet analysed the impact of support on this group or determined how the considerable improvement in mathematical development was achieved.

Formal teacher assessments at the end of Year 2 show improvement in standards at the end of Key Stage 1, more so in reading and writing than mathematics. Slightly more pupils achieved a secure Level 2 in reading and writing but standards are still low, particularly in reading and mathematics. Provisional data for the end of Key Stage 2 shows improvements in English, mathematics and science. The proportion of pupils reaching the expected level for their age in English is just above last year's national average, but science and mathematics remain below. The school has rightly identified mathematics as a priority for improvement, as standards are lower and only just above the national 'floor target' of 65%. However, it needs to investigate

the reasons for this more thoroughly and be clearer about the action it needs to take. Performance at the higher Level 5 remains below average across all three subjects.

Data analysis provided by the LA, based on this year's optional tests in Years 3, 4 and 5, indicates that standards, as measured by the numbers likely to reach age expectations at age 11, are close to national averages in English in Years 3 and 4 but considerably lower in Year 5. Mathematics is again weaker across all year groups. So far, the school has not analysed the progress made by each year group in 2007-08. However, it can show that the progress made by those pupils in Year 6 with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, who have been at the school all the way through Key Stage 2, is often good.

Personal development and well-being

Pupils make good progress in their personal development and this continues to be a relative strength of the school. Pupils value the beliefs of others and are proud of the wide range of cultures they share. This was seen in an assembly for Years 5 and 6, where several pupils read moving accounts of their positive experiences of school life. Behaviour around the school is generally good with few exceptions and the number of exclusions is low, reflecting the school's commitment to inclusion. In most lessons there is a positive working atmosphere and pupils have good attitudes to learning, even when they are not sufficiently challenged. Pupils are usually responsible in moving around the building and at playtimes, although current building works present additional risks that not all pupils fully appreciate. They enjoy taking on responsibilities and co-operate well with others. However, not all pupils are prepared well enough for the next stage in their education because standards remain too low, particularly in mathematics. Attendance is satisfactory overall, but some pupils miss too much school or arrive late.

Quality of provision

Although most of the lessons observed during the monitoring visit were satisfactory, there are still inconsistencies in the overall quality of teaching and learning. As a result, pupils are not always making the progress that they are capable of. Any acceleration currently relies on extra intervention, rather than consistently good quality teaching. Teachers support each other through joint planning in year groups, and the use of new frameworks provides a structure for sequences of lessons. However, plans do not yet link with ongoing assessment of what pupils can do, nor are all teachers systematically evaluating lessons. As a result, subsequent lessons do not build sufficiently on previous learning. The systems currently in place to track pupils' progress are unwieldy and do not readily compare progress with age-related expectations. Nevertheless, the information is used well to plan appropriate interventions for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. However, the progress of other groups within the school is not as closely analysed and senior leaders' discussions about pupils' progress with class teachers are not regular enough to check that work is always set at the right level. Consequently, planning does not consistently identify tasks well matched to all pupils' learning needs. Teachers are taking more responsibility for directly teaching the lower attaining

pupils and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Teaching assistants have had limited, but helpful training and are now working more closely with teachers to support pupils in lessons, although planning does not always make clear to teaching assistants how they can challenge pupils to move their learning forward. On occasions, some pupils are given too much adult help when they could do more for themselves. Both teachers and teaching assistants need further training to develop their skills and confidence in meeting the needs of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

The curriculum is satisfactory. Recent changes to the timetable for the school day are ensuring that the time given to literacy and numeracy is maximised. However, there are insufficient links between subjects and consequently opportunities are missed for pupils to make practical use of their skills in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT) across a range of other subjects. Provision within the Foundation Stage continues to be good. Children learn successfully through a wide range of stimulating activities. These are well organised so that children stay on task and learn to be independent. They make good progress in the basic skills of reading, writing and number because opportunities are carefully planned into a wide range of work through imaginative topics.

Marking of pupils' work is still uneven. There are some good examples of teachers making clear to pupils what they should do in order to improve their work further, but this is inconsistent. Some pupils know their targets and what the next steps are in order to move up to the next level in their work. Nevertheless, these targets are not reviewed regularly enough, routinely used to inform planning or referred to in lessons to ensure that they are effective in helping all pupils make progress.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in January 2008:

- Accelerate all pupils' progress by improving the use of assessment data in lessons so that pupils are given challenging tasks well suited to their needs and know better how to improve their work – inadequate
- Improve the teaching for pupils with lower attainment, including those identified as having learning difficulties and/or disabilities – satisfactory

Leadership and management

The headteacher has taken the lead in acknowledging that, at the time of the last inspection, there had been insufficient focus on standards at the expense of developing the school's role within the community. He has responded positively to the support from the LA and, in particular, the partnership which has been commissioned with Belleville Primary. Capacity at senior, and particularly middle management, levels is limited at the moment and there is a heavy reliance on the associate headteacher to lead change. However, positive steps have been taken to enhance leadership and management from September. Neither deputy headteacher will have a class teaching role and new, experienced staff have been recruited to lead phases and literacy. The development of these senior and middle leaders is key to creating the school's own capacity to bring about and sustain improvement. Their respective roles and responsibilities need to be clearly defined and the impact they are having closely monitored. Governors show a determination to improve and

develop their responsibility to hold the school to account. They have a better understanding of the data and information that should be available to them and are asking more pertinent and challenging questions in meetings.

The LA and associate headteacher have supported senior leaders to develop both the skills for, and a more systematic approach to, self-evaluation. There is now a more accurate picture of the strengths and weaknesses of provision, particularly teaching and learning, and a systematic plan for building on this in the autumn term. However, there is still a need for more rigour. For example, the analysis of the standards and progress of different groups of pupils should be routine. Furthermore, when an issue is identified, such as the weaker performance in mathematics, the next step should be to accurately pinpoint the reasons, and then to plan appropriate strategies to bring about improvement. Over time, self-evaluation should also cover all aspects of school, not just those that were weaker at the last inspection, to ensure that there is no complacency about any aspect of provision or outcomes.

The improvements in self-evaluation are linked to the development of a process for school improvement planning. The plan itself is still very much at an early stage and not yet sufficiently clear in the distinction between tasks and outcomes, or between checking implementation and evaluating impact. Nevertheless, the process of school improvement planning is improving. The need to focus on the few key priorities that will improve outcomes for pupils, to have a logical sequence of actions to address them and to regularly evaluate the impact is better understood.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in January 2008:

- Add more rigour to its self-evaluation procedures – satisfactory
- Ensure the school improvement plan identifies clearly and coherently the main strategic priorities, and how they will be achieved, so that it ensures consistent improvement across the school – satisfactory

External support

The support from the local authority (LA) is satisfactory. It is valued by the school and is at a manageable level. The LA was swift to deploy a range of support following the inspection, but rightly has kept this under review and streamlined it when appropriate. The commissioning of support from Belleville School has been particularly effective and is influencing practice at many levels, including governance. The LA statement of action meets requirements and has helped to ensure satisfactory progress in three of the four areas identified for action. However, whilst progress has been secured in end of key stage results this year, it has been by funding additional support and not by bringing about the step change required in the quality of the provision. At times the LA has communicated an overly optimistic view of progress to date, which has not been helpful to the school.

Priorities for further improvement

- Ensure that there is a clear strategy for improving achievement in mathematics, based on a thorough analysis of provision and outcomes.