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8 July 2008

Mr Andrew Hogarth
Headteacher
Pelham Primary School
Pelham Road
Bexleyheath
DA7 4HL

Dear Mr Hogarth

SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF PELHAM PRIMARY SCHOOL

Following my visit with David Whatson, Additional Inspector, to your school on 1 and 2 July 2008, and Usha Sahni HMI on 2 July 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 February 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 Bexley.

Yours sincerely

Robert Lovett
H M Inspector

SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING OF PELHAM PRIMARY SCHOOL

Report from the first monitoring inspection: 1 and 2 July 2008

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher and deputy headteacher, subject leaders, other members of the leadership team and the chair of governors. They spoke to pupils, looked at pupils' work and met with the school improvement officer.

Context

Since the school was inspected, the recently appointed headteacher has taken up his post full time. Subject leaders have been appointed for English, mathematics and science and the leadership team has been enlarged with new roles for key stage phase leaders. There is new leadership in place for the Foundation Stage.

Achievement and standards

While standards are rising, they remain below average. The school's tracking data indicates those pupils currently in Year 6 will reach standards in English, mathematics and science that are significantly higher than last year and may be close to average. Standards are rising most sharply in mathematics. The same tracking data shows that, while they are rising, standards throughout the school are not high enough and that the proportion of pupils making the expected levels of progress remains too low, particularly in writing. Lesson observations support the school's view that there is too much variation in pupils' progress between classes and year groups.

Children in the Foundation Stage are now making better progress because the provision and resources are better focused on children's learning. For example, the outside learning environment is better organised so that children's experience of learning is more active. Children make better progress in developing their speaking and listening skills than writing.

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

- Raise standards in English, mathematics and science – satisfactory

Personal development and well-being

Pupils state that they feel safe, secure and happy at school. They are aware that the school is improving and particularly like the new system of rewarding good behaviour and effort. Pupils get on well in classrooms and in the playground. The school buildings and grounds are well kept and litter free indicating that pupils take pride in their school and care for their environment.

The importance of good attendance now has a high profile within the school. Parents are regularly reminded about it and pupils are rewarded for their good attendance.

Those pupils whose attendance is unsatisfactory, or is at risk of being so, now receive targeted support. However, the attendance of a few pupils remains a cause for concern.

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

- Work with parents to improve attendance – good

Quality of provision

Through additional training and frequent monitoring, the quality of teaching and learning has improved. There is now a greater proportion of good and outstanding lessons although a minority of lessons remain inadequate. Lesson planning now follows a consistent format and teachers frequently start their lessons by sharing the learning intentions with pupils. In most lessons, teachers consistently use the school's new approach to managing pupil behaviour. In the better lessons pupils are enthused by the fast pace and the range of questions and activities used by their teachers. In the best lessons pupils know exactly what they have to do because teachers' explanations are clear and they carefully check pupils understanding. In these lessons a challenge is frequently portrayed as fun and exciting. In the most effective classrooms, these high expectations are reflected in very good displays that celebrate pupils' achievements and exemplify high standards. However, some classrooms are cluttered and untidy. Too often classroom displays are not of a high enough quality and do not reflect sufficiently high expectations. Additional adult support is often deployed well, but too often they tell pupils what they should know or do rather than question them, to develop their thinking and extend their learning.

The curriculum is appropriately focused on raising achievement in English and mathematics.

The school's current system of assessing and monitoring pupil progress is cumbersome. However, teachers are increasingly using this information to inform their planning and improve pupil progress. Teachers are therefore becoming more accountable for their pupils' progress. Pupils are often given targets in English and mathematics, but they do not always know them or what they need to do to improve further.

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

- Ensure that teaching consistently challenges pupils to achieve as well as they can – satisfactory

Leadership and management

At the time of the last inspection, leadership and management were inadequate. The recently appointed headteacher has been instrumental in transforming and improving the structure of the school's leadership and management. He has improved subject leadership by ensuring that subject leaders have clear job descriptions and time to carry out their responsibilities. They have used this time well to monitor the quality of teaching and learning and to introduce measures intended to improve consistency and raise standards. They coordinate their work well and there are now clearer lines

of communication and accountability. While their role is developing, key stage phase leaders are kept well informed about improvements in the classes for which they are responsible and about areas in need of further improvement. The deputy headteacher has a good understanding of how well pupils are doing and of the progress they are making. She says this information is now being used more effectively to ensure pupils' learning is better supported and that they make better progress. Regular pupil progress meetings where the achievement of individual pupils is tracked and discussed are now in place. The new leadership team is beginning to tackle underachievement with real determination. All teachers spoken to say that actions taken so far have had a good impact on school improvement. They welcome the new lesson planning formats and the greater focus on clear learning objectives. Teachers and others who work with pupils also welcome the additional professional development they are receiving and say it enables them to teach more effectively.

The school improvement plan accurately identifies priorities. It would be more effective if it was clearer about when actions are to begin and end, who is responsible for carrying them out and for monitoring their effectiveness and the resource implications.

The governing body is committed to helping the school improve. It is well informed and increasingly involved in monitoring how well the school is doing. For example, English, mathematics and science subject leaders now have linked governors who visit the school regularly and who will report back to the curriculum committee. A group of governors helped draft the school improvement plan and set the school's priorities for the coming year. A clearer and more robust school improvement plan and local authority statement of action will enable them to monitor and challenge progress even more effectively.

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

- Improve leadership and management by making leaders at all levels accountable for standards and achievement – good

External support

The local authority has provided effective support from a range of consultants and advisors. This support has been well coordinated by the school improvement officer. However, the local authority's statement of action currently lacks sufficient detail about how support will be managed and how it will support the school in continuing to improve. For example, exactly when and what support will be provided is unclear. The school improvement officer recognises the need to align the statement of action more closely with the school's identified priorities.