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20 November 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 Ann Sydney and David Watson, Additional Inspectors, to your school on 11 and 12 November 2008, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the second 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

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – 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 second monitoring inspection on 11 and 12 November 2008

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher and deputy headteacher, the chair of governors, the local authority school improvement officer and the key stage phase leaders. They also spoke to pupils and staff and looked at pupils' books.

Context

Since the first monitoring inspection a number of teachers have moved to different year groups and two new teachers have been appointed. The school's pupil population is changing, with a higher proportion of pupils joining the school speaking little or no English.

Achievement and standards

The proportion of pupils reaching the nationally expected level in English, mathematics and science has risen significantly. In English and science there was also a significant rise in the proportion of pupils reaching the higher levels of attainment. While standards in mathematics and science are expected to be broadly average, standards in English remain below average and this is largely because standards in writing are not high enough. This view is supported by a scrutiny of pupils' books which confirms that standards are rising and that pupils are making better progress, but also confirms that writing remains the school's Achilles' heel. Standards in Years 1 and 2 remain below average and standards in writing are much lower than in reading. This is in part a consequence of the previously inadequate provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS).

If all pupils are to do as well as they should their rate of progress will need to accelerate across the school.

Children in the EYFS are also beginning to do better, particularly in the Nursery where there is a well-planned introduction to early language and literacy skills and the effective use of individual writing targets.

While most groups of pupils perform similarly, those who speak a first language other than English do less well than other pupils and less well than similar pupils nationally.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- raise standards in English, mathematics and science – good

Personal development and well-being

Most pupils like coming to school and say that they feel safe and secure. This view was endorsed in a recent questionnaire for parents and carers. Pupils are aware that the school is improving, particularly in relation to its environment, and are positive about recent changes with some saying they now enjoy lessons much more and find the teaching more exciting. Relationships are good and pupils have positive attitudes to learning. Pupils also commented favourably on the introduction of the 'Red Book' and 'Golden Book' and the positive impact that this has had on behaviour. Many pupils spoke glowingly about school lunches. They have a good understanding of what constitutes a healthy diet (citing, for example, that milk is an important source of calcium) and the importance of exercise.

The school has strengthened its promotion of good attendance by offering rewards, refusing to sanction holidays in term time and monitoring attendance carefully. Parents are increasingly made aware that absences disrupt children's learning.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- work with parents to improve attendance – satisfactory

Quality of provision

There is now no inadequate teaching and the proportion of lessons that are good or better exceeds the school's target. This is due to frequent monitoring linked to good feedback and professional development. Although there is some outstanding teaching, there is too much inconsistency, even across parallel classes, in how well new initiatives are implemented. Writing skills are not sufficiently developed in the EYFS and this holds back achievement further up the school. Learning has improved because teachers are now making better use of data to set more challenging targets and work that is better matched to pupils' needs. Assessment during lessons has improved, with good examples of self-assessment and links with pupils' individual targets. Although marking is sometimes linked to pupils' targets, this is not consistent. Where assessment is weak the learning objective is based on the completion of a task rather than the skills or knowledge to be taught. This makes it more difficult to judge progress. In the EYFS, there is insufficient rigour in moderating the accuracy of foundation stage profile assessments. There is good, clear signing by staff and pupils to ensure the inclusion of those pupils with hearing impairments. Helpful displays support pupils in independent learning and classrooms have a more welcoming feel to them. There has been a significant increase in the number of pupils whose first language is not English. Although early learners are well provided for, those beyond conversational level are not always supported well enough in lessons.

Although the planning of the EYFS curriculum is improving, it does not always make explicit what children are to learn and what additional adults are to do. The physical limitations of the building are continuing to hinder the learning of children in

Reception; they do not have frequent access to a dedicated and covered area and the classroom is too small to offer easy access to all six areas of learning.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- ensure that teaching consistently challenges pupils to achieve as well as they can – good

Leadership and management

On this visit inspectors focused on the role of the phase leaders who manage the EYFS and Key Stages 1 and 2. Because of the good support they have received, these members of the senior management team are now better placed to monitor and challenge the work of those in their teams. They have been instrumental in improving the appearance of classrooms and making them better places to work and learn. Displays are now of a higher quality and better reflect the school's rising expectations. Although their work is beginning to have an impact on standards, the phase leaders know there remains much to do. For example, there is significant inconsistency across parallel classes and within key stages in the quality of teaching, in marking and in recording pupils' progress against their targets.

The headteacher and deputy headteacher are now tracking pupils' progress much more effectively. They are using this information better to ensure that challenging targets are put in place for every pupil. This clear focus on how well each pupil is doing is beginning to have a positive impact on their progress. The school's action plans are now clearer about who is responsible for carrying them out and for monitoring their effectiveness. However, some success criteria are too vague so that it will be difficult for those responsible for monitoring them to know whether they have been met. For example, the school's plan to raise standards in English, mathematics and science is not referenced to its targets. The school's self-evaluation, while generally accurate, is too descriptive and focused on provision rather than outcomes.

The governing body continues to provide good support. Governors have undertaken a range of training which is enabling them to act as a more effective critical friend and hold the school to account. Governors are beginning to develop stronger links with subjects such as literacy and numeracy and with some key stages such as the EYFS.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- improve leadership and management by making leaders at all levels accountable for standards and achievement – satisfactory

External support

The local authority has provided satisfactory support for the school and governing body. The school improvement officer and his colleagues have contributed to improving the quality of teaching and learning and are committed to helping develop the role of phase leaders and further strengthen marking and assessment.