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26 November 2008

Mrs Liz Hills
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 Chris Wood, HMI and Dr Stephen Parker, Additional Inspector, to your school on 18 and 19 November 2008, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the fifth 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; the school is now better placed to improve than at any time since being made subject to special measures, but has taken too long to reach this point.

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 the Board of Governors and Director of Children's Services for Southwark.

Yours sincerely

Robin Hammerton
HM Inspector

Special measures: monitoring of Eveline Lowe Primary School

Report from the fifth monitoring inspection on 18 and 19 November 2008

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, including 16 lessons and four assemblies. They scrutinised documents and pupils' work and met with the executive headteacher, staff, pupils, the chair of governors, a representative of City Challenge and representatives of the local authority.

Context

Since the previous monitoring inspection, two of the temporary federation vice-principals have been appointed as head and deputy of the school, under the executive head. The head of school is permanent. The deputy head post is also permanent and a new appointment has been made to that role from January 2009.

Achievement and standards

Standards in English and mathematics, as shown in provisional national data from 2008, remain significantly below local authority and national averages in the Early Years Foundation Stage and in Key Stages 1 and 2. There has been some improvement in science, where standards are broadly average. Standards in writing are very low and fell significantly at both Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 in 2008. Pupils' letter formation continues to be an area of particular weakness as do limitations in the range of vocabulary and sentence structures pupils use. There is now greater consistency in the school's approach to teaching writing, with early signs that the strategies used are beginning to have a positive effect. However, it is too soon to evaluate their impact on standards. The quality of singing, rightly seen as important by the school, is high but the repertoire for older pupils is too narrow.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- raise achievement in English, mathematics and science – inadequate

Personal development and well-being

The improvement in the attendance rate has been sustained. It is now broadly average as a result of the school's firm policies. Pupils continue to enjoy school and are keen to join in all activities. They behave respectfully in assemblies, which are carefully planned as a key moment at the start of each day. These are largely successful in promoting pupils' personal development but are too constrained by time, and sometimes concluded too quickly, to promote deep reflection and readiness for the day ahead.

In lessons, pupils listen well and are quick to follow instructions, though some pupils work slowly, particularly in writing tasks. They cooperate well at key moments such as when discussing ideas with a talk partner.

Outside, there is some rough play but behaviour at playtimes has improved, in part because more play equipment is available. Staff organise activities such as skipping games, showing pupils effectively how to play together. Year 6 pupils are currently being trained as playground leaders, which is a useful extension of their responsibilities. Other pupils take on classroom duties, though the range of opportunities remains limited.

Quality of provision

The quality of teaching has improved since the previous monitoring inspection. There is now more good teaching and fewer inadequate lessons. Better planning and assessment systems have been introduced in Nursery and Reception. The learning environment in the Reception classroom is much improved and is more stimulating, though the outdoor areas in both Nursery and Reception are underdeveloped. Lesson planning throughout the school now uses a common format which has brought about some greater clarity and consistency in setting objectives and expectations. Teachers generally have appropriate expectations for pupils' attentiveness and active involvement. Pupils' interest is often stimulated well through practical activities. In Year 1, for example, a lively session of combining letter sounds with actions was very effective. Discussions in lessons are usually lively and thoughtful. The school has reinforced the importance of key lesson elements such as the use of learning objectives and plenary sessions. In practice, however, the quality of these is mixed and some plenary sessions are superficial.

The school's assessment system provides a detailed picture of pupils' progress in English and mathematics so teachers have access to reliable information on the needs of individual pupils. Nevertheless, it remains a significant weakness that, in too many lessons, even the best ones, the tasks set do not match pupils' needs closely enough. In some lessons too little is expected of higher attainers. Sometimes, work is too hard for lower attaining pupils, particularly in mathematics. There are instances of effective marking that show pupils how to improve their work but this is inconsistent. The school has begun to put in place a standard approach to the teaching of writing and is in the process of organising training for teaching assistants to help them fulfil their roles.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- make better use of assessment in lessons in order to accelerate pupils' progress and raise standards – inadequate
- improve significantly the quality of teaching and learning across the school – satisfactory

Leadership and management

The uncertainty about the future leadership structure of the federation noted at the previous monitoring inspection has been resolved successfully. Funding negotiations with the local authority have been satisfactorily concluded. There is now a sustainable long-term structure, which provides greater stability and confidence

about the school's future. The school improvement plan has been rewritten and is now a useful and relevant working document, focused in appropriate areas. The governing body is well organised and committed. In addition, there is the firm prospect of a new building, with work due to start next year, which will unify the school on the same site. These factors taken together mean that, for the first time since the school became subject to special measures, the conditions and structures are now properly conducive to providing accountability and resolving the school's long-term, deep-seated problems. Improvements noted earlier in the report have followed from this.

The executive headteacher continues to provide purposeful and rigorous leadership which inspires the loyalty and confidence of others. The head and deputy head of the school are working effectively with staff on a day-to-day basis to improve practice. Mentors, some of whom come from outside the school and who support the staff in each year group, are also having a positive impact on improving the quality of teaching. There remains much to do, however. Constructive links between the federated schools enable teachers to swap classes for periods for their professional development.

The role and impact of middle leaders shows some development but remains limited. The subject leader for English is working productively to promote the recent changes to the teaching of writing. The phase leader for early years has also started to lead some needed improvements.

The school's self-evaluation is honest and accurate. Lesson gradings, which were a weaker aspect at the last monitoring inspection, are appropriate. However, the self-evaluation process continues to depend considerably on external support, with the school needing to take back further responsibility. Additionally, self-evaluation information is presented in a number of different ways without being fully coherent or appraising the school as a 'whole'.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- improve the quality of monitoring and self-evaluation to provide a more accurate picture of teaching, learning, standards and achievement – satisfactory
- ensure that the effectiveness of the federation management structure is regularly evaluated and that it successfully brings about improvement across the school – satisfactory

External support

The local authority support has improved since the previous monitoring inspection, in that it has recognised and dealt with the uncertainties about the federation management structure and funding. The newly formed local authority project board for the school helps ensure that consultant and advisory support is coherently focused. A City Challenge adviser contributes usefully to this board and to the school. The local authority recognises, however, that the school needs to take the main responsibility for its own future if it is to become satisfactory. The recent report

of the school improvement partner is very useful and accurate in its analysis and suggested actions. However, it includes a 'non sequitur' when claiming that the recent good Ofsted inspection report on the other school in the federation 'confirmed' that Eveline Lowe School has the necessary capacity to address the issues raised and that the current support available to it is appropriate.

Priorities for further improvement

- Use assessment information more explicitly, even in the better lessons, to ensure that work is challenging and closely matched to the needs of all pupils.
- Ensure that the school's self-evaluation is organised in such a way that it provides a coherent view, and overall analysis, of the effectiveness of the school as a whole.