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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 to your school on 25 and 26 February 2009, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the third 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 – good

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – good

Newly qualified teachers may be appointed.

This letter and monitoring inspection report will be posted on the Ofsted website.

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
Her Majesty's Inspector

Special measures: monitoring of Pelham Primary School

Report from the third monitoring inspection on 25 and 26 February 2009

Evidence

The inspector observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher and deputy headteacher, subject leaders, the school council and a representative from the local authority. He also observed a range of lessons across the school and looked at pupils' writing books.

Context

A new reception class teacher started in January. The school is undergoing a rolling programme of redecoration. Changes are being made to the provision for the Early Years Foundation Stage which will enhance access to outside learning experiences significantly.

Achievement and standards

The proportion of pupils reaching the nationally expected level in English, mathematics and science has continued to rise. The pupils currently in Year 2 have made especially good progress. Standards in reading have risen and there has been particularly good improvement in the quality of pupils' writing. Pupils in Year 6 are also making better progress, with good gains in writing and mathematics. This is in large part a result of the school's enhanced focus on improving pupils' writing in English lessons and across the curriculum. However, the school's much improved systems for tracking and monitoring pupils' progress has identified that this good rate of progress is not consistent across all classes. As a result, well-focused support and challenge has been put in place to raise standards in the few classes where progress is still too slow. The same systems have correctly identified that spelling is a weakness across the school and appropriate steps, such as diagnostic testing and time for daily teaching of letters and sounds, have been introduced.

A scrutiny of pupils' writing books confirms the view that standards continue to rise and that most pupils are making better progress. Appropriate targets for improvement are in all books and progress in relation to these is regularly recorded. Marking is regular and detailed. However, where standards in writing are rising least quickly, there are insufficient checks that advice and instructions are being acted on. In these classes, expectations about what pupils can do are not high enough and pupils' writing does not always convey a sense of pride. Pupils say they like the 'Writer of the Week' board which has helped celebrate achievement and raise the profile of writing in the school.

Children in the Nursery and Reception classes are making better progress because the quality of teaching is improving. Children's individual learning needs, including

the need for them to develop their language and communication skills, are being more effectively met.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- raise standards in English, mathematics and science – good

Personal development and well-being

Because the school has taken robust action, attendance has improved. Attendance is carefully monitored and is now in line with that of primary schools nationally. Levels of absence are published in the school's fortnightly newsletter and regular individual and class attendance is celebrated in assembly. There is good support from the education welfare officer and the school's attendance policy has been reviewed and strengthened. In addition, the partnership between the school and families has been improved, resulting in better attendance for targeted pupils.

Pupils continue to be impressed by improvements in behaviour and the generally calmer atmosphere. They say the 'diamonds' which track pupils' behaviour over the course of the day are very effective and that 'no-one wants to move in the wrong direction'. This positive impression is reinforced by talking to pupils who are polite, friendly and eager to tell visitors how much their school is improving. Because relationships are stronger, pupils have more positive attitudes to learning and say they continue to enjoy their lessons.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- work with parents to improve attendance – good

Quality of provision

The quality of teaching is continuing to improve. This is because the senior management team and the leadership team regularly monitor the quality of teaching and learning. This has enabled them to form an accurate picture of where the most and least effective teaching lies and to provide good support and challenge to ensure that standards rise. In most lessons, teaching assistants are well used, particularly to support the learning of individuals and small groups. In some lessons they are less well used during the whole-class parts of lessons and, on occasion, they are little more than spectators.

Since the last visit, the quality of marking has improved significantly. It is now consistently detailed and helpful. It tells pupils both how well they are doing in relation to their improvement targets and learning objectives, and also what they need to do to improve further. The link between marking and targets is explicit and effective. Pupils say they know their targets for English, mathematics and science and value the regular feedback on how well they are doing. They also like the fact that targets are changed quickly once they have been achieved. While the tracking of how well pupils are doing has improved considerably since the last inspection, the school is ambitious to improve it further and the introduction of a new system has



the potential to make the process less cumbersome and avoid replication. Because the school has a clearer picture of how well groups of pupils and individuals are doing, it is better able to provide targeted support and challenge. The regular pupil progress meetings, involving senior members of staff, class teachers and pupils, are proving useful in helping pupils do better and have the potential to raise standards further once they become better established.

One of the most obvious improvements is in the physical appearance of the school. Classrooms and corridors are now bright, light and attractive. Learning resources such as books and practical equipment are well organised and readily accessible. The clutter and disorder which once characterised some classrooms has been consigned to history.

The range of before- and after-school clubs and activities has increased substantially, partly as a result of requests from parents/carers and pupils. The range now includes multi-sports, judo, ukulele, choir, bells and word wizards. Pupils say these extra clubs have helped them in their work and make school more enjoyable. For example, one pupil was adamant that attending science club had improved her understanding of science and meant she was making better progress.

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

The headteacher and deputy headteacher continue to provide effective and committed leadership. The school's improvement plans now have a better focus on raising standards and on using measurable success criteria so that the school knows better how well it is doing. Self-evaluation is robust and honest. This and the resulting action plans have been instrumental in improving the quality of teaching and learning and in raising standards.

The last visit focused on the role of the phase leaders who manage the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stages 1 and 2. This visit looked more closely at the role of the subject leaders for literacy and numeracy. Both have a clear and accurate picture of standards in their respective subjects and know what needs to be done to sustain progress. They analyse and interpret data very well so that they can target resources and support where they are most needed. They work well with the phase leaders and together they have helped ensure greater consistency in target setting, marking, assessment and the quality of teaching. They are aware there is still work to be done. The school is committed to ensuring that all pupils achieve well and that standards, particularly in writing, rise consistently across all classes.

Progress since the last inspection on the areas for improvement:

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

External support

The school improvement officer knows the school very well. With his adviser and consultant colleagues, he has helped ensure there has been good support which is well tailored to meet the specific needs of the school. For example, there is well-focused support for the strategic role of subject and phase leaders. As a result, weaknesses in provision are being addressed and expectations raised. Staff are fulsome in their praise for the local authority's commitment to school improvement and its responsiveness to their needs. The local authority is aware of the need for its interventions to diminish over time, in line with the school's developing capacity to evaluate for itself how well it is doing.