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Mrs L Shute
Headteacher
Rowdown Primary School
Calley Down Crescent
New Addington
Croydon
CR0 0EG

Dear Mrs Shute

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Rowdown Primary School

Following my visit with Juliet Ward, Additional Inspector, to your school on 8 and 9 December, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in June 2010. The full list of the areas for improvement which were identified during that inspection are set out in the annex to this letter. The monitoring inspection report is attached and the main judgements are set out below.

Progress since being subject to special measures – good

No additional 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 the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Croydon.

Yours sincerely

Graham Lee
Additional Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in June 2010:

- Raise pupils' attainment in English and mathematics by:
 - increasing the level of challenge and accelerating the pace of learning in all lessons
 - ensuring that the curriculum offers regular planned opportunities for girls and more-able pupils to do as well as they can
 - track the progress of groups of pupils more rigorously to ensure that they all make good or better progress.

- Raise the quality and effectiveness of leadership and management by:
 - urgently pressing ahead with plans to establish an effective senior leadership team
 - ensuring that the governing body plays a full part in school improvement, particularly by challenging its performance
 - bringing the quality of all teaching up to the level of the best through rigorous classroom monitoring with a sharper focus on how well pupils are learning.

- Take more robust action to improve the attendance of pupils overall and particularly of the minority of persistent absentees.

Special measures: monitoring of Rowdown Primary School

Report from the first monitoring inspection on 8 and 9 December 2010

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, other senior leaders, the Chair of the Governing Body, other partners and a representative from the local authority.

Context

Since the last inspection, three new teachers have joined the school. Two of these are newly qualified teachers who had been appointed prior to the inspection. A new senior leadership team has been created consisting of the headteacher, the business manager and four assistant headteachers. All of these members have been appointed from within the existing staff. A new Chair of Governors took up her post in September 2010.

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning

Although Year 6 pupils did not take national tests in 2010, school data show that their attainment remained well below national levels, particularly in English. These pupils, however, made good progress from their low starting points at the beginning of Key Stage 2, especially in reading. Current data show that pupils in Years 5 and 6 are attaining at higher levels and that the gap with the national average is closing significantly.

Most pupils enjoy their lessons and have positive attitudes to their learning. They are keen to contribute their ideas and cooperate well for the most part in pairs and groups. They respond particularly well when they are actively engaged in their learning. For example, in a Year 4 lesson, a 'hotseating' activity enabled one pupil to assume the role of a character in the 'Enchanted Horse' while others asked perceptive questions about her feelings and responses to particular situations. This enabled all pupils to deepen their understanding of the story and to be able to see events from the perspective of one of the characters. In a Year 5 mathematics lesson, good questioning from the teacher and practical investigation enabled pupils to make good progress in their understanding and measuring of capacity. These examples illustrate why pupils' progress is accelerating and attainment is rising.

Children get off to a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage, although the school's use of data to confirm their progress is not yet fully established. In the rest of the school, progress is improving but remains variable. In Year 1 and Year 3, for example, the attainment of many pupils remains well below the levels expected for their age and they are not yet making the rapid progress which will enable them to

close the gap. In a few lessons, the teaching does not fully engage and challenge all pupils. As a result, they lose focus and progress slows. School data indicate and observations confirm that pupils' progress accelerates rapidly at the top end of the school.

Judgement

Progress since the last section 5 inspection on the areas for improvement:

- Raise pupils' attainment in English and mathematics – *good*

Other relevant pupil outcomes

Pupils generally behave well. Their positive attitudes are reflected in the way they conduct themselves around the school and in their relationships with each other, staff and visitors. Pupils in Key Stage 2 took great pleasure in sharing their thoughts about their school with inspectors, particularly in talking enthusiastically about what they learn in different lessons. These positive attitudes are not yet reflected in all classes, however. In a few lessons, a minority of pupils do not behave well and low-level disruption has an impact on learning. Pupils' increasing pride and enjoyment of school mean that the quality of presentation in most classes is good. Pupils feel cared for and safe at school, and talk knowledgeably about how they can ensure they are safe when not at school.

The rate of attendance has improved over the last two years but remains below national figures. The school has had some success in reducing the number of persistent absentees, but there are still too many pupils who remain in this category and miss too much school. In most cases, there is a clear link between the attendance and poor attainment of these pupils. Although the school has tightened up its procedures, it has been slow to respond to advice from consultants about holding parents and carers fully to account for the attendance of their children.

Judgement

Progress since the last section 5 inspection on the areas for improvement:

- Take more robust action to improve the attendance of pupils overall and particularly of the minority of persistent absentees – *satisfactory*

The effectiveness of provision

The quality of teaching has improved significantly since the last inspection and many of the lessons seen by inspectors were of good quality with some outstanding practice. Teachers have good relationships with their classes and generally manage them well. They give pupils interesting things to do which engage and motivate

them well for the most part, making good links with other aspects of the curriculum. For example, in an English lesson in Year 6, pupils were consolidating their learning about the First World War through the novel 'The Silver Donkey'. Film clips, drama and a re-enactment of the trenches in the classroom inspired searching questions and perceptive insights into the realities of the war. Teachers routinely share the objectives of lessons with pupils, which sets a purposeful framework for learning. Mostly, they plan successfully to meet the needs of different groups of learners, and teaching assistants make a good contribution to the quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities in particular. Topics are carefully considered so that they interest boys and girls equally. In a few lessons, teachers' strategies for behaviour management are not fully successful and, as a consequence, low-level disruption interferes with the learning and slows progress.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The new leadership team has considerably strengthened the capacity of leadership at all levels and provides increasingly effective support for the headteacher. Roles and responsibilities are clearly defined and phase leaders are good role models in leading improvements in teaching and learning. They have a good grasp of the issues facing the school and are developing a range of strategies to monitor the effectiveness of teaching and learning in their areas. Key to this development is the regular progress meetings that have been set up to identify potential underachievement at an early stage and to put in place effective support to ensure that it is addressed. The new business manager has overall responsibility for the data on pupils' performance and works closely with the headteacher and senior leaders to review pupils' progress. Consequently, the collection and use of data has improved significantly since the last inspection and continues to become more refined. There is still more to do. Children's progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage is not yet tracked securely, for example, and the school is still building a profile of pupils' progress from term to term in year groups other than 2 and 6. Leaders are aware that they need to do more to track the progress of specific groups of pupils, for example those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those of higher ability. The new leadership team have considerably enhanced the school's embedding of ambition and driving improvement, and the impact is already clear in improvements in teaching and learning. There has not yet been time for the new team to secure uniformly good teaching and learning and consistently good progress for pupils.

The new Chair of Governors works closely with the headteacher and has a good grasp of the issues facing the school. Individually, governors are working hard to provide the necessary challenge and support to school leaders. However, the governing body has been slow to respond at a strategic level and there is little evidence that it has established formal strategies for monitoring and challenging the school in relation to the issues raised by the last inspection report.

Judgement

Progress since the last section 5 inspection on the areas for improvement:

- Raise the quality and effectiveness of leadership and management – *good*

External support

The local authority's statement of action clearly sets out how it intends to support the school and was judged to meet requirements. The local authority responded speedily to the last inspection and has provided a wide range of support to the school. In the first instance, school leaders found this rather overwhelming and that not all the support offered was proportionate or helpful to them. However, the support from the mathematics consultant has been particularly useful in improving teaching and learning in the subject. The headteacher has worked closely with the Link Inspector, who is now brokering the authority's support much more effectively so that it is proportionate to the school's needs. However, the local authority has been slower to respond to the needs of governors. Although, they have helped governors to establish contact with support services, the urgent training needed by all members of the governing body has still not taken place and vacancies remain despite the pledge to ensure that the governing body is fully constituted.

The support provided through London Challenge has been particularly effective. A fruitful partnership with a successful school in Bromley has helped the new leadership team to develop a range of strategies for monitoring the effectiveness of the school. The improving teacher programme has also been effective in improving the quality of teaching and learning.