

Tribal Education
1–4 Portland Square
Bristol
BS2 8RR

T 0300 123 1231
Text Phone: 0161 6188524 **Direct T** 0845 123 6001
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk **Direct F** 0117 311 0430
www.ofsted.gov.uk **Direct email:** Matthew.Parker@tribalgroup.com

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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 to your school on 22–23 March 2011, 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 second 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 is 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.

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – 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 second monitoring inspection on 22 and 23 March 2011

Evidence

The inspector observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, the chair of the governing body, a representative of the local authority and the school's partner headteacher provided through London Challenge.

Context

There have been no significant changes in the context of the school since the last visit and no staff changes. The governing body recently held elections for parent governors and is now fully constituted.

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

School data confirm that children get off to a good start in the lively and welcoming Early Years Foundation Stage, where they enjoy exploring the wide range of stimulating activities provided for them. Elsewhere in the school, improving teaching is helping to accelerate progress.

Pupils behave well in lessons and are generally enthusiastic about their learning. They respond thoughtfully to their teachers' questions and work well in groups and when discussing their learning with 'talk partners'. They show increasing awareness of the purpose of their learning and the factors that help them to know if they have been successful. For example, when pupils in Year 3 were writing diaries related to *Diary of a Killer Cat* they were very clear that they needed to write in chronological order, in the past tense and in the first person. Pupils respond particularly well when they can see the relevance of their learning. This was evident, for instance, in Year 4 when pupils were writing enthusiastically about their trip to Knole House the previous day and when Year 4 pupils were working out the perimeter of King Henry's jousting field, which related closely to their history topic. Topics are chosen carefully to interest both boys and girls and there is no significant difference in progress related to gender.

School data show that pupils' progress is accelerating throughout the school, although it is slower in Years 3 and 4. The new programme for teaching reading is paying dividends in Key Stage 1 but weaker reading skills in Year 3 and 4, in particular, are inhibiting learning for some pupils. There remains more to do in all year groups to close the gaps so that more are reaching age-related expectations. Pupils' progress in Year 6 is exceptionally strong and these pupils are attaining at higher levels in English and mathematics than their counterparts last year.

Judgement

Progress since the last monitoring inspection on the areas for improvement:

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

Other relevant pupil outcomes

Pupils continue to behave well in class and around the school. They are friendly and polite for the most part and keen to talk about their learning. Occasionally, in lessons there is some minor off-task behaviour when they are required to sit for too long without active involvement or when the teaching does not engage them fully. Nevertheless, behaviour has improved markedly in one or two classes and no instances were seen of low-level disruption having an impact on learning. Some pupils do present challenging behaviour from time to time and there have been a number of exclusions this year, all for serious breaches of discipline.

The school has now instigated more robust procedures to encourage good attendance. There are clear procedures in place which are implemented consistently by all members of staff. Attendance also has a high profile amongst pupils through a variety of attendance awards. As a result, attendance has improved considerably this year and is moving closer to the national average. The proportion of pupils who are persistently absent has also reduced, although there are still a small number of families who do not send their children to school often enough. Inevitably, in almost all cases, this has an impact on their attainment and progress. The school is working in close partnership with other agencies, such as the educational welfare service, to address the needs of these pupils and their families.

Judgement

Progress since the last monitoring 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 – good.

The effectiveness of provision

The significant improvements in the quality of teaching noted at the last visit have been consolidated and further advances have been made. In consequence, almost all of the teaching seen was of good quality. Of particular note is the improvement in behaviour management in a few classes which is creating a much more purposeful environment for learning. A strength of the teaching is the effective strategies teachers use to engage and motivate learners, including the use of interactive technology. For example, in Year 1 pupils enjoyed watching an animated film and then assuming the role of the animal characters to insert 'speech bubbles' into the

animation prior to acting out the scenarios for themselves. Topics often link areas of learning together, enabling pupils to use their basic skills in literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology with increasing effect to support their learning in other subjects.

Assessment strategies are now much more firmly embedded, which is enabling teachers to provide good levels of challenge for all groups of pupils, including those with a range of special educational needs and/or disabilities. For example, in a Year 5 lesson on dialogue and reported speech the teacher used different targets and measures of success to structure the learning well for pupils of varying abilities and to challenge them to achieve as well as they could. Teaching assistants often make a good contribution to the quality of education, particularly for pupils with special educational needs and emotional and behavioural problems. The school is also using assessment information to target support effectively to pupils who are underachieving. For example, one-to-one support in reading and mathematics has seen some significant gains for a number of pupils in Years 3 and 6. Occasionally, activities are still not challenging enough for the higher-attaining pupils.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The headteacher continues to provide effective leadership and to ensure that leadership at all levels is much more widely distributed. The enthusiastic senior team is embedding ambition and driving improvement with increasing success and have galvanised the support of staff. Leaders have an accurate picture of the quality of teaching through a range of monitoring activities. They can also point to examples of where teaching has improved as a result of this monitoring and more direct coaching.

Data systems are developing well and the recent round of assessments is enabling leaders and teachers to have a clearer picture of the progress of every individual in the school. This information is being used by teachers with increasing effect to plan to meet the needs of their pupils and to set up interventions for those who are underachieving. At a strategic level it is being used well by leaders to target resources where they are most needed. Pupil progress meetings are helping leaders and teachers to gain a shared understanding of the issues in each class. However, this work is at an early stage of development and the targets set have not yet resulted in consistently good progress in each class. The collection and use of data in the Early Years Foundation Stage has moved forward apace. The school now has very clear data about children's progress in both the Nursery and Reception classes which is enabling leaders to identify trends and potentially weaker areas. The school is using the data well to compare the performance of boys and girls but is not yet analysing it in sufficient depth to identify trends related to pupils' ethnicity or special educational needs.

Leaders have an accurate understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and have made good progress in addressing the issues identified at the last inspection. They have clear and effective plans to address the areas of weakness, although targets are not always sharp enough to enable the success of actions to be measured clearly. The governing body is now responding to the needs of the school with more urgency. Governors have received training which is enabling them to be more confident in holding the school leaders to account, for example in relation to attendance. A new strategy has been put in place through which governors are linked with different members of the senior leadership team to enable them to monitor progress in different phases of the school. There has not yet, however, been sufficient time for the impact of this strategy to be evident. The level of support provided for the school is reducing as leaders are developing a much better capacity to deal with the issues facing the school internally.

Judgement

Progress since the last monitoring inspection on the areas for improvement:

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

External support

The school has continued to work very well with its partner school provided through the London Challenge. This has considerably developed the skills of the leadership team and both schools have found it to be a fruitful relationship. The school improvement partner has also provided effective support, for example in training governors. The link adviser has brokered support for the school effectively. For example, the recent support with Early Years Foundation Stage data have been particularly useful.