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Mrs C Clark
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Clark

Implementation of Winterbourne Nursery and Infant School's Action Plan

Following the visit of Mr S Long HMI and Ms T Herring HMI to your school on 16 and 17 May 2005, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to confirm the inspection findings which are recorded in the attached note.

The visit was the second monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures. The focus of the inspection was to assess: the pupils' standards of attainment and their progress; the quality of education provided; the leadership and management of the school; the pupils' attitudes and behaviour; and the progress that has been made in implementing the action plan.

The school has made limited progress since the last monitoring inspection and reasonable progress overall since being subject to special measures.

I am copying this letter and the note of the inspection findings to the Secretary of State, the chair of governors and the Director of Education for Croydon. This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Andrew Reid
Head of Institutional Inspections and Frameworks Division

IMPLEMENTATION OF WINTERBOURNE NURSERY AND INFANT SCHOOL'S ACTION PLAN

Findings of the second monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures

During the visit 22 lessons or parts of lessons and an assembly were inspected. Meetings were held with the headteacher, the chair of governors, other senior staff and a representative from the LEA. Informal discussions were held with other members of staff and with pupils and samples of work were examined. A range of documents was scrutinised. Using this evidence, HMI made the following observations to the headteacher, the senior management team, the chair of the governing body and representatives from the LEA.

Since the last monitoring visit two teachers have left including the co-ordinator for the pupils from ethnic minority groups. This post has remained vacant since the end of the spring term; a replacement will not be starting until September of this year.

Standards in lessons were below those expected for the ages of the pupils, although standards in the reception class were close to expectations. No lessons were inspected in the nursery.

The quality of teaching and learning was unsatisfactory overall and weaker than at the time of the previous monitoring inspection. Teaching was satisfactory in eight lessons, good in six, unsatisfactory in seven and poor in one. There was a high proportion of unsatisfactory teaching in Year 1. There is not enough effective teaching to increase the rate of the pupils' progress and raise standards.

In the good lessons the teachers explained clearly what the pupils were to learn and the pupils understood what was expected of them. The teachers had sufficiently high expectations of the pupils and employed a range of teaching strategies which supported different learning styles. Lessons built on previous learning and the pupils' tasks matched their differing levels of attainment. Key vocabulary was explained and this, together with opportunities for discussion and the use of visual resources helped all of the pupils to make progress, including those for whom English is an additional language. The teachers asked challenging questions which encouraged the pupils to deepen and extend their thinking. Relationships between the pupils and adults were positive. The teachers and additional adults worked together as a team. The teaching of phonics was good and the supply of books for guided reading has greatly improved.

The teaching in the unsatisfactory lessons, and in a significant number of lessons where it was barely satisfactory, was characterised by the teachers' low expectations and insecure subject knowledge. Consequently, activities were not sufficiently matched to the pupils' needs and some of the pupils were given too little work or tasks which merely reinforced what they already knew. Learning objectives were confused with activities in the teachers' planning and the completion of the work was therefore seen as more important than improvements in learning. The teachers failed to use effective strategies to secure the pupils' active participation and their use of questions was ineffective. Other adults were not properly deployed.

The quality of the pupils' learning was nearly always related to the quality of the teaching and was therefore unsatisfactory overall. The pupils were enthusiastic and focused when they were sufficiently challenged, given opportunity to work in pairs and groups and when the teachers used a range of stimulating strategies. However on too many occasions the pace of learning was slowed because the pupils took too long to settle, lacked focus or were not expected to work quietly or concentrate. The extent of their attention during whole-class sessions was often limited and some of the classrooms were untidy and too cluttered to support learning. Provision for the pupils who have English as an additional language was underdeveloped overall. The computers in several classrooms are too high for comfort and in general, information and communication technology was underused.

The pupils' attitudes and behaviour were satisfactory in 13 lessons; good in five, unsatisfactory in three and poor in one. Unsatisfactory attitudes and behaviour were only seen in Key Stage 1. Where the teaching was unsatisfactory the pupils' attitudes and behaviour were often unsatisfactory but, in a small number of lessons, the pupils' displayed satisfactory attitudes and behaviour in spite of unsatisfactory teaching. A significant number of the pupils found it difficult to concentrate during whole-class stages of lessons or to work sensibly and this slowed both their own progress and that of other pupils. In one lesson, for example, two pupils were play-fighting. The strategies used by teachers for tackling inattention and unsatisfactory behaviour were inconsistent; for example, counting down with the pupils to establish quiet was effective on a number of occasions, whereas teachers sometimes persisted in using strategies which did not work.

The pupils' behaviour around the school and in the corridors was usually satisfactory but there were instances of pushing and shoving to get through doors first. Some of the pupils were restless and inattentive in the assembly inspected.

Attendance during the spring term was just under 88 per cent, a significant fall when compared with the average of just over 91 per cent in the autumn term of

2004 and well below the national average. Authorised absence is very high and is caused by holidays taken in term time.

Assessment has improved. The pupils' progress is tracked although the levelling of their work is not consistently secure across the school. Performance data is beginning to be analysed to identify patterns of achievement and to allocate additional support for the pupils who make least progress. All of the pupils have appropriate targets for literacy and numeracy which are suitably based on the school's targets. However these developments do not have sufficient impact on lesson-planning and the tracking sheets do not include information on the pupils' attainment in English. Marking is patchy and rarely attempts to move the pupils forward. The pupils make repeated errors in their work without correction.

The headteacher is committed to the school and is energetic in her approach but has not fostered a shared vision for school development. Policy documents in key areas such as teaching and learning, marking and attendance have not been agreed and the morale of some staff is low.

Line management structures and job descriptions are sound within the senior management group and the leadership team which includes middle managers; however, there is a lack of co-ordination between those with responsibility for particular year groups and those with responsibility for aspects of academic provision. Strategic decision making is unclear; too much emphasis is placed on short-term actions rather than the bigger steps necessary for long-term improvement. Records of key meetings do not clearly identify outcomes or reflect sufficiently on the impact of actions discussed at previous meetings. The action plan provides a sound basis for recovery but its implementation, and the monitoring of its impact on the pupils' standards of attainment, does not focus sharply enough on quantifiable measures of success.

A deficit budget has been set for the current financial year; financial planning does not indicate how the deficit will be tackled.

The governors have had some appropriate training from the LEA to help them carry out their roles effectively; they have begun to visit classrooms more regularly and are better informed about the work of the school. Information provided for them by the senior management team has improved but remains unsatisfactory overall and the governors do not yet have the independent capacity to verify what they are being told and to hold the school to account.

The LEA monitors the work of the school effectively and is providing appropriate support based on accurate evaluations of progress. The outcomes of a recent monitoring visit provide a good agenda for improvement at the school.

Action taken to address the areas for improvement

1: improve the focus of leadership to ensure there is a clear impact on whole school improvement

Some positive steps have been taken to bring about school improvement: there is a comprehensive programme of monitoring and work scrutiny by appropriate members of staff; some suitable training has been provided for those in senior and middle management positions and a wider range of data about the pupils' performance is being collected. The leadership of mathematics and English has improved although the co-ordinators do not always have the opportunity to fulfil their roles effectively. However the headteacher and other senior managers have not used their monitoring of the school to inform and co-ordinate the actions necessary to raise standards.

Progress on this area is limited.

2: raise standards in reading, writing and mathematics

Assessment and target setting have improved and the information has been used to set and monitor targets in literacy and numeracy. The timetable has been changed to address gaps in the pupils' numeracy skills. Lessons have been monitored and a good deal of training has been provided to improve teaching in literacy and numeracy. As a result progress in phonics is good; provision for guided reading has improved and many teachers are using talk partners effectively to develop writing. However, the Year 2 pupils are unlikely to reach the levels predicted for the 2005 national tests and the school's analysis demonstrates continued underachievement in Key Stage 1, even compared to the pupils' modest targets. Overall the rate of progress in lessons is too slow to raise standards.

Progress on this area is limited.

3: improve the provision of education in the reception classes

This area was not inspected during this visit.

4: improve the pupils' achievement by raising the overall quality of teaching through Years 1 and 2

Despite the implementation of strategies designed to facilitate improvement, the overall quality of teaching and learning has deteriorated. The school has a substantial range of information on the quality of teaching but a failure to analyse the findings and make accurate judgements leaves the senior staff unable to

identify and tackle the factors impeding improvements. The layout of the common lesson plan is unhelpful for those teachers who need to improve the delivery of lessons; there is too little space to plan tasks properly or to state assessment criteria at varying levels.

Progress on this area is limited.