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Mr Tony Ahmet
Headteacher
Winterbourne Nursery and Infant School
Winterbourne Road
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Dear Mr Ahmet

SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF WINTERBOURNE NURSERY AND INFANT SCHOOL

Introduction

Following my visit to your school on 21 and 22 June 2006, 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 July 2004.

This letter 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.

Focus for the visit and evidence gathered

For this visit I focused on: the school's leadership and management; the children's attainment by the end of the Reception Year; their attainment in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 2 and the steps taken to improve attendance. In order to judge the school's progress, I scrutinised documents and pupils' work, analysed assessment data and met with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, other staff in positions of responsibility, the chair of governors and a representative from the local authority (LA).

Context

The headteacher took up his post on a part-time basis halfway through the spring term, replacing an acting headteacher. During this period he worked alongside the deputy headteacher while maintaining a commitment to the school where he was previously employed. He joined Winterbourne Nursery and Infants School on a full-time basis at the start of this term. Other staffing is stable, in contrast to the high turnover seen in recent years. Only one teacher, the coordinator for ethnic minority pupils, is leaving at the end of term and has yet to be replaced in that role.

Achievement and standards

Standards in the Reception Year have improved although the children's attainment by the end of the year is below average overall. There are relative weaknesses in communication, language and literacy, for example in writing. Nevertheless, attainment in areas such as mathematical development and personal and social development is close to average. Boys achieve less well than girls and their attainment is lower by the end of the year.

The standards achieved by the end of Year 2 have continued to rise. The school's validated assessments for this year show marked improvement in reading and mathematics, where standards are now in line with national averages. Standards in writing have also risen but not to the same extent as those in reading and mathematics. They remain below average overall and more able pupils do not do well enough. The boys are outperformed by girls in all areas with the exception of the more able boys in mathematics, where they do better than the girls. The performance of different ethnic groups is broadly even although the White British pupils do less well than other groups, particularly in literacy. There is some inconsistency between the standards reached by pupils in different classes.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in July 2004:

- Raise standards in reading, writing and mathematics - satisfactory progress

Personal development and well-being

While this area was not inspected fully, raising attendance levels was identified as an additional area for improvement in the last monitoring inspection and was, therefore inspected on this visit. Appropriate work has been undertaken to target support for pupils who attend poorly. The

attendance of these pupils has begun to improve and overall attendance has risen sharply, although it remains below the national average.

Quality of provision

This area was not inspected on this visit.

Leadership and management

Following the appointment of the headteacher, leadership and management have improved. They are satisfactory overall but with a fine balance of strengths and weaknesses. The headteacher provides clear vision, high expectations and a focus on improving the pupils' achievement. He is well supported by the deputy headteacher and they lead the senior management group effectively. The headteacher has a clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses through effective monitoring and evaluation. Good steps have been taken to bring about immediate improvements; for example organising booster classes for Year 2 pupils, supporting individual teachers and establishing effective assessment systems to track pupils' progress.

The quality of middle management has begun to improve although it is still inconsistent. With support from the headteacher, deputy headteacher and LA personnel, subject and year leaders have a reasonable understanding of what requires improvement within their areas of responsibility. They are beginning to take effective action to support their colleagues. However, their capacity to monitor, evaluate and plan improvement independently is embryonic. Both year and subject leaders have a much clearer focus on improving the pupils' progress. Nevertheless, there is a lack of clarity over the different roles they each play in this undertaking and how their efforts will be coordinated.

Up to this point the post-inspection action plan has provided a satisfactory vehicle for school improvement. However, it is now out of date and does not provide a comprehensive means to plan and monitor the next stages of the school's development. The school is beginning to show greater internal capacity for staff development, although there remains reliance on LA personnel in key areas such as subject leadership.

A deficit budget has been set for this financial year, taking account of new national arrangements for teaching and learning responsibility payments and a projected fall in pupil numbers. The headteacher and governors have drawn up an appropriate recovery plan to ensure a small positive out-turn by the end of the financial year.

Governance is satisfactory. The governors have a sound understanding of the school's overall strengths and weaknesses. They are beginning to use assessment data effectively to hold the school to account over the pupils' progress. While governors visit regularly, they do not work closely enough with staff in key leadership roles to monitor the actions intended to raise standards. They recognise this and meetings are planned.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in July 2004:

- Improve the focus of leadership to ensure there is a clear impact on whole school improvement - satisfactory progress

External support

The LA supported the school well during the transition in senior leadership. It has worked effectively with the new headteacher to support the staff and to bolster the school's capacity to improve itself. Appropriate support continues to be provided alongside a clear policy to monitor the impact made.

Main Judgements

Progress since being subject to special measures - satisfactory

Progress since previous monitoring inspection - satisfactory

Priorities for further improvement

- Develop a school improvement plan which builds on the school's evaluation of its strengths and weaknesses and sets measurable goals.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the chair of governors and the Director of Education for Croydon.

Yours sincerely

Stephen Long
H M Inspector