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Ms Sophie Allen
The Headteacher
Stonebridge Primary School
Shakespeare Avenue
London
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Dear Ms Allen

SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF STONEBRIDGE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Introduction

Following my visit with Atifa Sayani, Additional Inspector, to your school on 3 and 4 July 2007, 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 June 2006.

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.

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, members of the senior leadership team, a group of pupils, the chair of governors, and a representative from the local authority (LA). They spoke with other staff and pupils during the course of their work.

Context

The acting headteacher became the substantive headteacher at the start of this term. A class teacher took sick leave shortly after the last monitoring visit and will not be returning. A teacher on a fixed-term contract is covering this vacancy. An additional teaching assistant has been appointed to the Foundation Stage. The inclusion officer has left and been replaced internally on a temporary basis. The school has undergone some internal redecoration and refurbishment. The outdoor area for Foundation Stage pupils has been remodelled.

Achievement and standards

Standards remain low. Only around half to three quarters of pupils in most classes are working at the levels expected for their ages in reading, writing and mathematics. In Year 3, just over a third are working at expected levels and many have considerable ground to catch up. Pupils are starting to make progress in lessons and some are beginning to catch up lost ground. However, the rate of progress is inconsistent between classes, reflecting inadequacies in teaching in the past and some remaining weaknesses. A small number of pupils in each class is not making sufficient progress and further work is needed to identify the reasons for this and to target future support. The school's data show that pupils with learning difficulties who receive specific intervention programmes are generally making better progress. However, the school is yet to analyse its data to evaluate the progress of different groups of pupils, including those who speak English as an additional language.

The quality of pupils' work in books is improving. The school's focus on handwriting and presentation, albeit fairly recent, is helping to set expectations. However, there are still examples of unfinished pieces of work in pupils' books. At times, pupils can explain what they know and understand, for example in science, but have difficulty recording it because of weaknesses in writing.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in June 2006:

- Raise the achievement of all pupils, especially average and lower attaining – satisfactory progress

Personal development and well-being

Behaviour remains good in class with most pupils conforming to the school's expectations. The five exclusions this term involved three pupils for a specific incident. Pupils' attitudes to learning are positive and pupils say they like their school and enjoy coming. Attendance figures have improved as a result of the school's clear policy on involving parents and encouraging pupils to arrive punctually. Punctuality and attendance awards are raising pupils' awareness of the importance of school. Pupils are especially appreciative of the new headteacher's efforts to improve the school's facilities, such as the cloakroom and toilets. They recognise the school's increased focus on learning and talk readily about their targets in literacy and numeracy.

Quality of provision

The quality of teaching continues to improve slowly but is not yet consistently or securely satisfactory. Most emphasis has been put, rightly, on raising the quality of teaching in English and mathematics and it is here that most improvement can be seen. Improvements in lesson planning, noted at the last inspection, have been sustained. However, planning of different tasks to meet pupils' learning needs remains variable. Sometimes, what is written in plans is not translated into actions in

the classroom and so the level of challenge is not sufficient for higher attaining pupils and the quality of support for lower attainers is inconsistent. Although most additional staff are deployed effectively, there are still occasions when adults sit passively, especially at the start of lessons. Teachers are not regularly using what happens in one lesson to modify the next. Daily evaluations are not always completed rigorously so that the weekly plans for literacy and numeracy can be adapted from day to day. Marking is still inconsistent in quality, although there are some examples of good practice, and not used well enough to inform future planning. However, lessons now have a clear focus on key vocabulary that pupils are encouraged to repeat and use correctly. Some good strategies for engaging pupils in their learning, such as paired talk, are used more frequently although too many lessons still rely on a 'question and answer' approach that focuses on individuals and restricts the participation of the majority. Teachers uniformly share learning intentions with pupils at the start of lessons and some also talk about 'success criteria' so pupils are focused on what they are learning. Occasionally, the introduction to a lesson is too long and restricts the time that pupils have to complete their written work. Good lessons, where questions challenge pupils' thinking, are tightly structured and well paced so that learning time is not wasted. The practice of involving pupils in evaluating what they have learnt at the end of the lesson works well but is not consistent. Teachers consistently manage pupils well and have appropriately high expectations of their behaviour in class. Routines are well established so pupils know what is expected. The quality of the learning environment is improving. All classrooms contain aids to learning and pupils' work on display around the school is of better quality.

Provision in the Foundation Stage continues to improve. The environment is stimulating and the outdoor area has been transformed. As it is relatively new, staff are still adjusting the planning for the outdoors to ensure that the provision reflects all areas of learning. Staff are deployed and managed well. Having an additional member of staff has increased opportunities for engagement and interaction with children and this is encouraging the development of their language. Many activities encourage writing and role play. There is generally a good balance between adult-led activities and those children choose. Planning for focused tasks is clearly linked to assessment opportunities but is not clear about how tasks may be modified for children of different ages and abilities. The evaluations on individual children are not routinely used for the next day's planning. It is not always clear what children are expected to learn from the activities they choose for themselves and some staff would benefit from further guidance on how to develop these.

The inconsistent quality of support for pupils with learning difficulties, raised at the last monitoring inspection, remains an area of concern. The success of intervention programmes is monitored and evaluated in terms of pupils' progress but the quality of provision in class is not monitored closely enough. The absence of clear links between class activities and targets in pupils' individual education plans (IEPs) and the variable quality of these plans have been raised at previous monitoring inspections. The headteacher is temporarily overseeing the management of support for pupils who speak English as an additional language. She has devised appropriate

systems to identify their levels of language acquisition. Targeted support for pupils who are new to the school is generally good. Training from the LA consultant has raised staff's awareness of strategies to support pupils in class but they do not plan specifically for them in lessons. There is more to do to raise the profile of different cultures and languages across the school through displays, resources and the use of pupils' home languages.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in June 2006:

- Ensure that the quality of teaching is at least satisfactory across the school and share the best practice more effectively – satisfactory progress
- Improve the quality of the curriculum and management in the Foundation Stage – good progress

Leadership and management

The headteacher continues to provide good leadership. With a clear focus on raising standards, she is tightening procedures and setting out expectations for staff. However, her workload remains too heavy. There is more to do to build the capacity of the senior leadership team so that they can begin to lead whole-school changes and so that the headteacher can delegate key management tasks. Their monitoring role as core subject leaders is at an early stage of development. The headteacher's evaluation of the school's progress is much sharper than previously. It accurately identifies the impact that actions are having on outcomes for pupils. Senior staff are not yet involved in this evaluation. Links between evaluation and school improvement planning need strengthening. Morale is improving; staff are committed, as shown by their improved attendance, and motivated by the changes taking place. However, there is still a way to go to secure consistency of practice.

Regular monitoring of teaching gives the school an accurate view of strengths and weaknesses. Poor practice is challenged rigorously. The programme of staff training is tackling those areas that are priorities for whole-school improvement and individual staff have targeted support from LA consultants. Training on sampling and moderating pupils' work is helping to raise teachers' expectations as well as raising issues about continuity in the curriculum, presentation and marking. Discussions between the headteacher and class teachers about the progress of each pupil in reading, writing and mathematics, highlights discrepancies and increases teachers' accountability. However, the development of this work into a clear policy that sets out minimum expectations of teachers' practice is still at an early stage.

The governing body gets a good level of information from the headteacher and LA to enable them to ask the right questions, to hold the school to account, and to make informed decisions. The chair is setting targets for the governors' development and developing a system for reviewing their effectiveness. Individual roles and responsibilities are at an early stage of development. Currently, governors are seeking to appoint an additional governor with financial expertise. A part-time bursar, funded by the LA, will support the development of financial management

systems. The budget deficit is smaller than anticipated and is being managed by agreement with the LA.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in June 2006:

- Devise and implement a school improvement plan – satisfactory progress

External support

Good quality input from LA consultants is starting to have the desired impact on improving the key aspects of the school's provision. Staff appreciate the balance between support and challenge provided by the LA. Support is regular, well targeted and focused. More importantly, it is responsive to the school's changing needs. Regular strategy meetings provide a helpful review of the school's progress and identify emerging issues.

Main Judgements

Progress since being subject to special measures – satisfactory

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – satisfactory

Newly qualified teachers may not be appointed

Priorities for further improvement

- Develop the roles of senior staff and core subject leaders in monitoring, evaluating, and improving the quality of provision.
- Improve the quality of provision for pupils with learning difficulties; monitor the support they have in class and the quality of IEP targets.
- Improve the management of, and the provision for, pupils learning English as an additional language.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the chair of governors and the School Improvement Services for Brent.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jane Wotherspoon". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Jane Wotherspoon
H M Inspector