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23 September 2013

Ms Julie Vaggers
Headteacher
Rowland Hill Nursery School
White Hart Lane
London
N17 7LT

Dear Ms Vaggers

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Rowland Hill Nursery School carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

Following my visit to your school on 20 September 2013, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the findings of my visit. Thank you for the help you gave me and for the time you made available to discuss the actions you are taking to improve the school since the most recent section 5 inspection in July 2013.

Senior leaders and governors are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection. The school should take further action to:

- review and modify the targets in the action plan once an accurate measure of children's starting points has been established, including interim milestones to help measure the progress you are making towards the targets
- ensure that governors have a clear role in checking that actions taken have the desired impact
- embed the new approaches and routines in 'talking time'.

Evidence

During the visit, I held meetings with you and other senior leaders, representatives from the governing body and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The school improvement plan was evaluated. I observed two short sessions of 'talking time' and the new arrangements for

lunchtime. I looked at records of staff training undertaken so far, draft policies, new planning formats and revised systems for assessing children's levels of development and recording their progress.

Context

Since the inspection you have restructured the roles and responsibilities of the senior leadership team.

Main findings

The inspection outcome has been a strong impetus for change. The immediate changes you have made to the learning spaces, both indoors and outdoors, encourage better behaviour. This is because, as children move around the nursery, they are provided with more opportunities to be independent learners. The five simple ground rules, reinforced consistently and routinely, are well understood by the children. You have also set clear expectations of parents. The 'welcome' meetings at the start of the academic year, the home visits and the settling contract leave parents in no doubt about what you expect of them in their role as partners in the children's learning. The huge changes you have made to the arrangements for lunchtime are already having an impact on children's behaviour. The fact that tables are set with cloths and flowers creates the right kind of environment so that children feel they are 'in a restaurant'. I observed that children's behaviour was calm; they were polite, and well mannered; they helped each other and took responsibility for serving themselves and others. The adults provided good models of how to behave, which the children copied.

Much training for staff, especially around improving 'talking time' to focus on developing children's language skills, has already taken place. Rightly, more is planned. The short sessions I observed showed that not all staff have high expectations of children's talk. The new format for planning what children will learn during focused adult-led sessions makes clear how activities will be different for children of different abilities. The system for assessing children's starting points and checking their progress over time is thorough. It offers much potential for you and senior staff to check that children are making the progress they should.

The action plan sets out appropriate activities that cover all the areas for improvement. It has clear criteria by which you and governors will be able to measure the impact of the actions you are taking. This includes numerical targets that relate to children's expected attainment and progress by the end of the academic year. However, given that more than half the children are new to the school and still settling in, these targets will need to be reviewed once staff have an accurate picture of the children's starting points and needs. The plan would benefit from interim targets so that you and governors can check the progress towards the

targets at various points through the year. Your commentary on the actions taken so far is a helpful way of keeping governors updated on what has been done but says little about the impact of actions on the children's learning. The plan sets out clearly how and when actions will be monitored, but it is not clear who has responsibility for carrying it out.

Governors have some bespoke training planned, based on an audit of gaps in their knowledge. Although several governors are relatively new to the role, they bring with them professional knowledge and expertise as well as enthusiasm and commitment to the school's improvement. We discussed ways in which governors could take a greater role in checking that actions have the desired effect on improving children's outcomes. Governors have several ideas for increasing their presence in and around the school, and aim to attract parent governors to the vacancies on the governing body.

Ofsted may carry out further visits and, where necessary, provide further support and challenge to the school until its next section 5 inspection. During the visit I recommended several Ofsted publications and the good practice section of the Ofsted website.

External support

You are drawing effectively on support from the local authority and from further afield. Officers have supported you in developing the action plan, and in setting targets as well as helping to resolve personnel issues. External consultants have provided training for you and the leadership team in how to support staff and how to challenge their underperformance. The comprehensive plan for staff training includes sharing practice from the provision for two-year-olds, such as the 'being two project' and the 'lullaby project', visiting other schools that are known to be outstanding and making use of the school's existing partnership with the other two nursery schools in the local authority.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Haringey.

Yours sincerely

Jane Wotherspoon
Her Majesty's Inspector