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22 October 2010

Mrs S Wilson  
The Executive Headteacher  
Northern Parade Junior School  
Doyle Avenue  
Portsmouth  
Hampshire  
PO2 9NE

Dear Mrs Wilson,

**Notice to improve: monitoring inspection of Northern Parade Junior School**

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 13 October 2010 and for the information which you provided during the inspection. Please also extend my thanks to the staff and pupils for taking the time to speak to me and to your School Improvement Partner for our telephone discussion.

Since the time of the previous section 5 inspection, five members of staff have left the school and one teacher is now working on a part-time basis. Four new teachers have been appointed, one of whom is on a temporary contract until the end of December 2010. The school has become part of a hard federation with Northern Parade Infants. Both schools now have the same headteacher, known as the Executive Headteacher; each school has an Associate Headteacher in charge of the day-to-day running of their school. There is now a single governing body for both schools. Two local authority governors have also been appointed. The new School Improvement Partner started to work with the school in September 2010.

As a result of the inspection on 11 and 12 February 2010, the school was asked to address the most important areas for improvement which are set out in the annex to this letter.

Having considered all the evidence, I am of the opinion that at this time the school is making satisfactory progress in addressing the issues for improvement and in raising the pupils' achievement.

The senior leadership team, as well as the governing body, has been rightly focused on those areas identified as being in need of improvement. This has resulted in

weekly reviews of progress and the embedding of new initiatives, such as improving the quality of teaching and learning by ensuring teachers challenge those pupils who are more able. Although this has led to rapid improvement in some areas, such as the progress pupils now make in mathematics, the rate of progress has been slower in other areas, due in part to staff changes, difficulties with recruitment and the reluctance of some staff to embrace change.

The school's 2010 data, for pupils at the end of Year 6, indicate that pupils' achievement is improving. Levels of attainment, particularly in mathematics and science, rose to above the national average, including for those pupils attaining the higher Level 5. Standards in English are also rising, but at a slower rate. Although the proportion of pupils attaining the higher Level 5 in English was above average, there are still too few pupils attaining the expected Level 4. Girls perform better than boys overall. This is because new initiatives, particularly in relation to writing, have been more successful in engaging girls than boys. Nevertheless, the actual gains boys make in English are at least satisfactory. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities continue to achieve well because of the effective specialist support they receive. However, the quality of support is not always as good as it could be in lessons. This is because not all staff who work with vulnerable pupils are fully aware of their needs and how best to meet them. The rate of progress pupils make throughout the school is not yet consistently good because, while there are pockets of good teaching, there are still weaknesses in teaching and learning in every year group.

Of the eight lessons that were observed, the large majority were satisfactory or better. Common features of the most successful lessons included the use of visual aids and exciting activities that engaged pupils in purposeful learning. In these lessons teachers ensured that pupils understood what was expected of them and staff built successfully on pupils' prior knowledge, understanding and skills. Good use was also made of questions to help extend pupils' learning and by way of checking how well pupils were progressing. There were sufficient opportunities for pupils to work independently and in groups, and to use and apply their skills. Common features of weaker teaching and learning included: teachers not encouraging pupils to use or develop basic literacy skills in other subjects; key vocabulary not being displayed; assessment strategies not used well; and, an unnecessarily slow pace of learning. Although most teachers try to provide good levels of challenge for the more able, they do not always use sufficient strategies to ensure that pupils of lower ability are able to progress as well as their peers.

Daily planning at times lacks detail about progression in skills and does not always clarify what pupils are expected to learn. Although all teachers use information and communication technology (ICT) to support their teaching, there are too few opportunities for pupils to use ICT to support their learning. Marking, while much improved, is still too variable and is at times over-reliant on pupils' own self-assessments. Nevertheless, pupils take pride in the presentation of their work and make effective use of new strategies to improve their spelling and punctuation.

Pupils behave well, enjoy their lessons and like coming to school. Levels of attendance by the end of last year were broadly average and are rising.

The senior leadership team has become more rigorous in its monitoring and evaluations. As a result, teachers are held more closely to account for the progress made by pupils; half termly meetings are used to monitor progress and identify pupils at risk of underachieving. This has led to the improvements now evident, particularly in the upper school. However, monitoring activities, including lesson observations, do not report enough on attainment or the progress made by pupils of different abilities. Subject leaders for mathematics and English provide good support for their colleagues through lesson observations, work scrutiny and by leading training sessions.

The school has increased its capacity to improve as a result of the hard federation, but there is still an over reliance on too few to drive and embed improvements. The school continues to ensure that appropriate checks are made when recruiting new staff.

The local authority has helped the school to make better use of data and to produce a useful improvement plan. However, despite further amendments to the local authority's statement of action, this document still does not meet all the requirements. Well-targeted support from an external consultant and an advanced skills teacher has contributed well to the school's progress.

I hope that you have found the inspection helpful in promoting improvement in your school. This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Gehane Gordelier  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Annex**

### **The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in February 2010**

- Raise attainment and improve achievement in writing and mathematics by:
  - improving pupils' spelling, punctuation and presentation skills and making more consistent use of the moderated writing portfolios to plan the next steps in their writingtargeting work more closely to the needs of higher attaining pupils
  - providing more opportunities for pupils to apply their skills in independent, investigative work.
- Improve the quality of teaching and pupils' learning by:
  - raising teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve
  - more effective questioning to develop pupils' ideas and understanding
  - involving pupils more in evaluating their work through marking which shows them how to improve.
- Ensure that leaders and managers further accelerate the pace of change by:
  - employing greater rigour in monitoring and evaluating all initiatives so that they become embedded and inconsistencies are eliminated
  - giving subject leaders opportunities to observe teaching and learning in their subjects so they can provide greater support for staff.