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10 March 2011

Mr M Bennett
Headteacher
Park Spring Primary School
Wellstone Avenue
Leeds
West Yorkshire
LS13 4EH

Dear Mr Bennett

Notice to improve: monitoring inspection of Park Spring Primary School

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 9 March 2011 and for the information which you provided during the inspection. I am grateful also to the members of the governing body, pupils and School Improvement Adviser for the time and help they gave.

Since the previous inspection of the school the deputy headteacher has assumed overall responsibility for the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1. The school has continued to experience higher than normal staff absence.

As a result of the inspection on 14–15 June 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 results of the Year 6 national tests in 2010 remained in line with the national average. Attainment was slightly above average in mathematics but slightly below average in English. The school's recent assessments indicate that the majority of children start in the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills slightly below those typically found. Current indications from the school's data are that pupils in Year 6 are making the progress expected of them, but slower progress in writing. Attendance dipped a little further below average in 2010. There is an above-average amount of persistent absence and no clear improvement is evident so far this year. However, pupils enjoy many aspects of their school life and speak enthusiastically about how they are helping to improve it.

Clear improvements have been made to provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage, under the thoughtful and dynamic leadership of the deputy headteacher and with support from the local authority. The use of the indoor and outdoor provision has clearly improved as a result of major investment in resources, including a fascinating 'Magic Garden', and

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better guidance for staff on how to engage boys and girls in exploring them. Profiles now capture children's development more precisely and include contributions by parents. Analysis of careful assessments, and of children's interests, increasingly informs comprehensive planning. The staff team has worked together well to develop better practice in talking with children, providing challenging opportunities and encouraging positive behaviour. As a result, children enjoy playing and learning together more, something commented on by parents and carers who stay to play with their children at the start of the day. The school is more successfully involving parents and carers in information-sharing events, too. It now has a more accurate picture of what children can do by the time they begin Year 1 and is adjusting expectations accordingly, as was seen in a writing session.

Monitoring by senior and subject leaders has considerably increased from a previously low level. Leaders' evaluation skills have been developed through observing lessons jointly with the local authority and by scrutinising pupils' work together. Senior staff evaluate the quality of teaching and learning rigorously. More frequently collected assessment information is being analysed to pick out how well classes, groups and individuals are doing in English and mathematics. Teachers have been helped to assess more accurately and meet regularly with senior staff to discuss the progress of their classes. As a result, they are adapting their plans better to match pupils' needs and to address challenging targets for progress. Governors are now better placed to review progress because they receive more-detailed reports. A teaching and learning policy has been agreed and observations are increasingly focused on specific qualities. Teachers receive feedback after monitoring and have had relevant training and opportunities to observe others. There are indications that some teaching has improved as a result. However, teachers are not always clear about what they need to do to improve, particularly in regard to teaching writing.

While some progress has been made on raising the quality of teaching, the school recognises that the target that 80% should be good remains some way off. The quality of teaching and learning in Key Stage 1 has been positively influenced by changes to staff deployment and leadership, but across both key stages, quality is currently variable. Relationships are positive and teachers manage behaviour effectively. In the better lessons seen, tasks were engaging and suitably challenging; pupils had good opportunities to talk through problems and understood how to do well. However, such quality was not consistently evident. Although staff are trying to use approaches which engage pupils better and accelerate the pace of learning, their effectiveness varies. Observed lessons achieved a more equal balance between teacher instruction and independent work by pupils than was seen at the last inspection. Teachers made objectives for learning fairly clear, and sometimes involved pupils to identify the steps to success for themselves and to assess their work. However, pupils' attention sometimes drifted when, for example, activities or questioning did not sufficiently involve them all. The effectiveness of classroom support is variable. Teachers have now adopted a consistent marking code, but feedback is not always helpfully precise and there was little evidence that pupils respond to it.

The local authority's statement of action is proving fit for purpose because it is ensuring the necessary support in the identified areas and provides clear milestones to aid leaders and

governors in monitoring progress. The practical help of consultants and the clear guidance and rigorous evaluations of the school improvement adviser are particularly valued by the school.

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

Yours sincerely

Ms Susan Bowles
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place on 14 June 2010

- Improve provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage, by:
 - planning activities that interest children and meet their individual needs
 - observing and assessing rigorously children's performance in a range of situations and using the information to plan the next steps in their learning
 - providing greater challenge for higher attainers
 - maximising the use of the outdoor environment to improve children's progress across all the areas of learning.

- Strengthen monitoring and evaluation, by:
 - improving the monitoring and evaluation skills of all leaders, including those in the Early Years Foundation Stage, in particular in observing teaching and learning and in analysing pupils' written work
 - establishing measurable success criteria to judge the effectiveness of measures taken to improve provision and outcomes for pupils.

- Raise the quality of teaching to at least good to improve pupils' learning, in particular at Key Stage 1, by:
 - using the good practice that already exists in the school as a model
 - ensuring that teachers find a better balance in their use of time between instructing pupils and letting them work independently
 - commenting precisely on pupils' progress in lessons and in their written work.