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18 March 2011

Mrs K Murphy
Headteacher
Springside Primary School
Springside Road
Bury
Lancashire
BL9 5JB

Dear Mrs Murphy,

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools: monitoring inspection of Springside Primary School

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 22 March 2011, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during the inspection. Please also pass on my thanks to the staff, members of the governing body, parents and carers and pupils for taking time to talk to me.

Since the last inspection, there have been some staff changes due to maternity leave and some new teaching staff have been appointed. The school remains subject to considerable building work. This has been suspended pending the outcome of a spending review.

As a result of the inspection on 8 December 2009, 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 has made satisfactory progress in making improvements and satisfactory progress in demonstrating a better capacity for sustained improvement.

Pupils' achievement is improving. Attainment at the end of Year 2 in 2010 rose to reach average levels in reading and writing, and in mathematics attainment was above average. Attainment at the end of Year 6 in English, which was average in 2009, fell to just below average. In mathematics, attainment improved on the 2009 results, to be in line with national averages. The proportion of pupils gaining the higher Level 5 in English and mathematics also improved. Pupils' progress overall at the end of Year 6 also improved significantly compared to recent years. Progress was good in mathematics and average in English. Girls continue to perform better than boys in all subjects at the end of Year 2 and the difference in English attainment becomes even more pronounced by the end of Year 6. Boys do slightly better than girls in mathematics by age 11. There is evidence to show that the school's strategies are now beginning to make a big impact on boys' writing standards. Analysis of the school's data and evidence from lesson observations show that, for current pupils, achievement continues to rise across the school. Pupils say that their lessons are more enjoyable and engaging, and that they are given more information about their

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performance and how to improve it than previously. They also appreciate being able to use the better equipment and resources in school, such as new laptops. Lesson observations and the school's monitoring records indicate that the teaching profile remains similar to that at the last inspection. Pupils are keen to learn and behaviour and relationships were positive features in all the lessons observed. In some lessons observed, for example, in Years 1, 5 and 6, there was a very close match of group and independent work to the abilities of individual pupils. The tasks provided were interesting, motivated pupils of all abilities and had an element of challenge. As a result, pupils worked with energy and enthusiasm and their knowledge and skills were improved. This is not the case in all classes. Pupils, most particularly the more able, are sometimes held for too long in whole-class teaching sessions and have insufficient time and opportunity to access work appropriate to their abilities. While teaching assistants make a significant impact on pupils' learning in some lessons, the ways they are deployed in others makes them less effective. The school has improved teachers' skills in assessing pupils' attainment and progress. A well-planned and effective school-wide programme of professional development has been implemented for all staff. The reliable data produced are being used to provide extra help and support for pupils who are underachieving and to accelerate the progress of those performing better than expected. The school also has good information about the achievement of different groups of pupils, most notably that of boys. The introduction by the headteacher of pupils' progress reviews has increased staff accountability for pupils' performance. The school is aware that targets for pupils aged seven and eleven must be challenging enough to raise standards and ensure at least good progress.

The school has worked diligently on the curriculum. There is a greater emphasis on incorporating a wider range of subjects into lessons through a topic-based approach. These topics are designed to appeal to all, but especially to boys. Examples are the gardening project, the World Cup topic and the space topic. The latter culminated in an 'Alien Day' in which all pupils took part in a range of exciting activities. Strategies such as these have motivated boys to write much more and to value their work. Parents and carers spoken to during the inspection, confirmed their children's increased enthusiasm for learning since the last inspection. Teachers have successfully increased the engagement of more-able pupils by giving them more opportunities to choose their activities, particularly in writing. Thanks to a local authority initiative, staff have taken opportunities to pair up with those from other local schools to share good practice. Work continues to increase the level of personalised learning for all pupils. The school's strategies are having an impact on achievement but the way in which teaching and learning is structured in some lessons means that pupils miss opportunities to gain as much as they might from the improving curriculum.

The headteacher leads the school with vision and determination. She is assisted by a skilful team of senior leaders and an increasingly effective governing body. The School Improvement Partner and local authority consultants provide valuable expertise and advice. Together they ensure that the impact of strategies is regularly checked and evaluated. They know that more time is needed to show that improvement has been fully secured. The school has made good progress in developing the role of middle leaders. Staff have been organised into curriculum teams, each with a lead teacher. These provide a clearer picture

of the effectiveness of teaching and learning and the curriculum in individual subjects. As well as the improvements in English and mathematics already noted, their work has raised science standards from below to above average levels.

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

Mr Peter Jones
Additional Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place 8 December 2009

- Increase the proportion of pupils gaining the higher levels in teachers' assessments and national tests at age seven and eleven so that the school achieves above average results, overall, by:
 - increasing the proportion of good and better teaching
 - improving teachers' skill in assessing pupils' development against National Curriculum levels, especially in the assessment of writing.
- Develop a vibrant and balanced curriculum to challenge and engage pupils more, especially boys and the more able.
- Develop the role of middle managers to lead, monitor and evaluate the subjects taught to ensure that standards continue to rise.