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Mrs S Papas
The Headteacher
Heavers Farm Primary School
58 Dinsdale Gardens
London
SE25 6LT

Dear Mrs Papas

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 23 September 2010, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during my visit. Please also pass on my thanks to the chair of governors and pupils who spent time talking to me.

Since the school's last inspection, six teachers have left the school and six new teachers have joined. A new staffing and leadership structure has been introduced. The number of pupils on role has remained stable, although the proportion of pupils who join and leave the school at different times of the school year is still high. Similarly, the high proportion of pupils: from ethnic minority backgrounds; speak English as an additional language; and, those who are known to be eligible for free school meals, remains high and has increased further.

As a result of the inspection on 11 June 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 **good** progress in making improvements and **good** progress in demonstrating a better capacity for sustained improvement.

The new staffing and leadership structure underpins the improvements made. Much work has been done to enable staff to better understand data and how they are analysed. Staff are now held accountable for the progress that pupils make and they know that the monitoring and analysis of data is no longer a task of the senior leaders alone. Leaders' expectations of them are high. Staff are expected to deliver consistently good quality lessons and so improve pupils' achievement which is satisfactory overall. They have responded well to the challenge and there is clear evidence that the quality of teaching is improving. Staff have, for example, been retrained to refresh their understanding of the use of 'assessment for learning' strategies. Where teaching is consistently good, these strategies make a positive

difference to the pupils' progress. Lessons are lively and pupils say they are fun. This was evident in a Year 5 mathematics lesson when pupils were regularly on their feet as they reinforced their understanding of times tables. They enjoyed the active learning and quickly moved on to real-life problem solving activities that required them to use their multiplication skills. Pupils are confident to work with partners and in groups to talk about their work. However, occasionally this strategy is not monitored by the class teacher well enough, for example when pupils with English as an additional language do not engage with each other as well as intended. Also, not all teachers ensure they intervene during independent learning when, for example, pupils need to be brought back on track or prompted to consider other activities. Most pupils know their targets and are proud of their achievements. However, some would appreciate opportunities to do more art and to be able to develop their own creative ideas.

When asked what makes the school special, pupils said that it was the help they receive. This is evident in the marking of their work. Pupils know that marking celebrates what they do well while identifying what they could improve. Self-assessment and peer assessment is a regular feature of lessons. Pupils benefit from the school's approach to raising attainment in writing through 'Big Writing' lessons. The school's new approach to the curriculum is also used well to develop pupils' writing skills in different subjects. Early indications are that pupils' attainment is being raised. However, more needs to be done to raise attainment, particularly for groups of pupils such as those of White British heritage and those who are known to be eligible for free school meals.

Another key element of the school's work has been to improve relationships with parents and carers. The evidence shows that these partnerships are stronger. As a result, pupils' attendance has improved and is now broadly average. Persistent absenteeism has also reduced. However, punctuality continues to be an issue and is followed up rigorously. Pupils have responded well to the school's initiatives to improve behaviour and attendance. Exclusions are vastly reduced and pupils are proud if their class wins the best attendance of the week award.

Leaders, managers and governors have worked hard to improve their effectiveness. Governors have developed new ways to monitor and evaluate the school's work. However, school development planning does not make explicit the financial commitment of intended actions to improve pupils' attainment. Monitoring of pupils' progress is rigorous and analysis of data by gender, group and ability enables the school to identify which intervention strategy is best for each pupil. The school's evaluation of the impact of the one to one mentoring programme provides strong evidence to show its benefits in terms of the progress that pupils make. However, an evaluation of all the strategies being used has yet to be completed.

Teaching assistants are now tracking the progress of the pupils they work with. The result of this work alongside their observational assessments will provide important information to accurately assess the success of interventions. The school has made

good use of advice and assistance from London Challenge and the local authority. However, support to assist the school's work to improve attendance has been limited.

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

Yours sincerely

Elisabeth Linley
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in June 2009

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning to become at least good, ensuring that lessons are always interesting and challenging for all abilities.
- Lift standards in writing and mathematics by giving pupils more opportunities to edit and improve their work, and to work on more investigations and real life problem solving in mathematics.
- Improve attendance.