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Mr Jamie Wingrove
Spon Gate Primary School
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Dear Mr Wingrove

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools: monitoring inspection of Spon Gate Primary School

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 16 June 2011, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during the inspection. Please pass on my thanks to the staff and the members of the governing body for their time and courtesy. I would particularly like to thank the pupils for the very enjoyable time I spent talking to them.

Since the last inspection, there have been a number of contextual changes. The soft federation arrangement which existed at the time of the last inspection has been formally dissolved, although the partnership continues to provide professional development for staff. Following local authority consultation, the school has made preparations to double the number of pupils joining the school from September 2011. Building work is currently underway to accommodate this change. The headteacher's appointment, which was temporary at the time of the last inspection, has been made substantive. There have been a number of staff changes.

As a result of the inspection on 28-29 January 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 has made good progress in making improvements and outstanding progress in demonstrating a better capacity for sustained improvement.

Attainment is improving rapidly. The proportion of pupils attaining Level 4 at the end of Key Stage 2 has increased from very low levels. It is now in line with the average in both English and mathematics at Level 4. Pupils' attainment at Level 5 is still below the average but has improved significantly on previous years. This



improvement is because almost all groups of pupils now make at least good progress over time, and many make accelerated progress.

Well-planned actions have resulted in improved progress in both English and mathematics. A comprehensive, daily programme of lessons, which rapidly develops pupils' skills in matching letters and sounds, was observed in Key Stage 1. The standard of writing in pupils' books is good and improving, particularly in Key Stage 2. This is because there are many opportunities for pupils to take part in exciting and interesting visits and activities, to give them stimulating experiences to write about. Pupils speak passionately about the way in which books have excited their interest in learning; for example, in Year 5, the novel *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas* has been used sensitively to extend pupils' thinking about the Second World War. This is an example of how recent curriculum developments have resulted in improved outcomes for pupils.

Lessons observed in mathematics were good or better. Calculation is taught consistently well. In a Year 2 mathematics lesson, a group of pupils were skilfully guided by their teacher to build on their existing knowledge of times tables, in order to work out more complicated calculations. They were then supported to use this knowledge to solve problems. Work in pupils' books shows that the recent emphasis on calculation has ensured that all pupils have a good and well-rehearsed understanding of which methods to use. Now that effective teaching is securely in place across the school, leaders agree that the most-able pupils would benefit from further stretch and challenge, in order that a greater proportion of pupils attain the highest levels, particularly in mathematics.

Leaders at all levels monitor pupils' progress assiduously and intervene quickly and effectively where necessary. The headteacher's drive and ambition to provide the best possible learning experiences and promote high expectations have been key to increasing levels of progress and the subsequent upturn in pupils' attainment. The same high degree of commitment and energy is shared by all senior leaders. Recent leadership training has successfully strengthened their role in driving school improvements. School self-evaluation is accurate and astute. The governing body has developed a secure understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They have become confident at monitoring, analysing and questioning the school's performance, as a result of training that they have received. They hold the school to account rigorously, for example, in evaluating recent improvements to pupils' achievements.

The school has received good and efficient support from the local authority. In particular, good quality support and challenge have been given to the school's subject leaders in their drive to raise standards through pupils' accelerated progress. Consultancy work has improved the consistency of teaching, especially for those teachers recently appointed to the school.

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

Fiona Arnison
Additional Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in January 2010

- Raise attainment in English by:
 - extending pupils' knowledge of phonics to accelerate their progress in reading and improve their understanding of spelling rules
 - providing opportunities for pupils to write at length independently and more extensively across a broader range of subjects and topics.

- Raise attainment in mathematics by:
 - increasing opportunities for pupils to record and explain the methods they use during number calculations
 - providing tasks that enable pupils to apply their knowledge of number to more challenging problem solving tasks.

- Intensify and extend the process of audit, review and self-evaluation to ensure that:
 - governors are more involved with senior staff when monitoring and analysing the performance of pupils and staff
 - priorities focus on improving the curriculum so that it provides more opportunities for pupils to apply their skills to a wider range of subjects and topics.