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Mrs Patrick
Headteacher
Seven Sisters Primary School
South Grove
Tottenham
London
N15 5QE

Dear Mrs Patrick

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools: monitoring inspection of Seven Sisters Primary School

Thank you for your cooperation, and the welcome extended, during the inspection of your school on 23 June 2011. I am grateful for the time you gave to our preparatory telephone discussions and for the information that you provided before and during the inspection. Please convey my thanks to your staff and pupils for their welcome, and their contributions.

As a result of the inspection on 18 and 19 November 2009 the school was asked to address the most important areas for improvement, 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.

The school is currently preparing for the arrival of an interim headteacher in September, pending a permanent appointment, following your retirement at the end of this academic year.

Attainment at the end of Year 6 remains low. However, a more secure base from which achievement can be improved is being developed lower down in the school. This is due to better teaching enabling more secure progress, and very good working relationships, both with pupils and their families, supporting a positive learning culture. Published indications of progress do not give the full picture as many pupils arrive at times other than into the Nursery or Year 1. Many of these pupils have complex needs due to their backgrounds, and some arrive from abroad speaking or writing little English.

This is a well ordered and disciplined community; pupils are happy and they enjoy being at school. They continue to support each other and feel safe and well cared for. Attendance is broadly in line with the national average. Pupils enjoy their work, but they are not confident or resilient learners. They do not often question or probe their understanding or that of their friends.

Teaching is improving satisfactorily. This is particularly evident in literacy where there is an appropriate emphasis on writing skills across the school. Sometimes, as in some mathematics lessons, over structuring an approach to a topic can inhibit learning by not allowing for more creative and imaginative responses from pupils. Several staff have refined the way they constantly gauge the quality of learning, including using better quality questioning. In the words of one pupil, 'Teachers get you to say the answer – they don't tell you.' This helps them to match the work more closely to individuals' needs. A consistent approach to marking is now in place, including colour-coded comments. It is beginning to encourage a dialogue between pupils and teachers. Many pupils respond to the yellow highlighted points, but the quality of information provided to point the way forward in learning is not consistently good. This is a missed opportunity as pupils are now at the point where they would be able to use such information well.

The headteacher communicates a clear sense of vision for the school. The priorities in the development plans are appropriate but the expression of their desired outcomes still lacks precision. Milestones are not used to indicate the achievement of significant steps along the way or to steer the implementation of the development plan during the year. The quality of information about the progress expected of pupils is well developed and good use is made of it to define important expectations at key points. The school is developing its capacity to sustain improvement. Middle leaders are developing a greater capacity to steer developments in their areas of responsibility, and data on pupils' progress is used better to hold people to account. The quality of the school's work with parents and carers, and its strong links with the community, are major factors in its development. Monitoring and a scrutiny of pupils' work currently give senior staff a good understanding of improvements in their achievements and the extent to which planning is being translated into changes in practice in the classroom. Plans to do more of this next year are in place. A group of governors oversees developments in the quality of teaching and learning but there is no evidence of close monitoring of the school's progress against the key issues identified in the last inspection by the governing body as a whole.

The changes at senior leadership level over the next few months will inevitably present challenges, but the school has a well-developed sense of its priorities and these are stated clearly in strategic planning documents. Governors and local authority advisers, as well as other senior staff, are well placed to continue to support the transition.

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

Alan Taylor-Bennett
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Secure good or better teaching in Years 1 to 6 by:
 - ensuring learning proceeds at a demanding pace so that pupils are fully challenged
 - matching work more closely to pupils' needs and abilities.

- Improve marking for pupils in Years 1 to 6 by helping pupils to know precisely what they need to do to make their work better to accelerate their rate of progress.

- Improve school development planning by ensuring leaders at all levels use progress and attainment data rigorously to check the success of action plans and to pinpoint areas where the school can become better.