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15 September 2011

Ms Zoe Mathie
Headteacher
Fletcher Way
Hemel Hempstead
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Dear Ms Mathie

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

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave me when I inspected your school on 14 September 2011, for the time you gave to our telephone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during the inspection. Please also convey my thanks to the Chair of the Governing Body, the representative from the local authority and the pupils.

Since the previous inspection, plans were approved for an extension to the nursery provision which is about to open. The proportion of pupils who are entitled to free school meals has increased as has the proportion who speak English as an additional language. An interim deputy headteacher was in post from September 2010 to July 2011 to cover a maternity leave of absence.

As a result of the inspection on 25 May 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 satisfactory progress in making improvements and satisfactory progress in demonstrating a better capacity for sustained improvement.

Pupils at the school achieve satisfactorily overall. Attainment across both key stages has remained low since the previous inspection, but lesson observations conducted by school leaders and by inspectors during this visit, validate the school's evidence that the rate of learning and progress is improving steadily, particularly for boys and pupils who speak English as an additional language. Learning and progress seen by inspectors in lessons was generally satisfactory or good. The school's decision to focus in particular on boys' achievement and on writing has had a noticeable impact on pupils' outcomes. The decision taken by the headteacher and deputy headteacher



to teach classes in Years 5 and 6, as well as allocating two teachers to the Year 6 class, demonstrates their commitment to school improvement.

Pupils observed in lessons responded positively to effective lesson planning which presented carefully thought-out tasks to challenge the more able pupils and allow for more independent learning. Teachers make good use of praise and extra adults in the classroom are well deployed and provide effective support to many pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. In less effective lessons, intervention is not yet precisely targeted to allow for some pupils to make expected progress and teachers do not allow enough time for pupils to work on their own. Marking is systematic and very informative and advises pupils on how to improve the quality of their work. Pupils are aware of their levels and targets and the school's open afternoons for parents and carers engage them in discussing their children's progress. Presentation of work and the appropriate use of punctuation remains a key area to be addressed.

A community cohesion plan is now in place and has been evaluated; however, the full impact of the plan is yet to be seen. Within the school community, there has been a concerted effort to develop a sense of pride in the school and a culture of mutual respect. This has secured a reduction in behavioural incidents and fixed-term exclusions. The school has not yet exploited the many opportunities to develop meaningful and productive links with establishments outside of the United Kingdom. Pupils appreciate the activities arranged by the school to promote a greater understanding of cultural diversity through events such as the international week, but the impact of these activities on pupils' outcomes has yet to be felt.

The school's leaders and managers demonstrate a great commitment to school improvement and the many staff who have recently joined the school share the headteacher's vision. These new colleagues are receptive to advice and constructive criticism. School improvement plans correctly identify the school's main priorities and are soon to be revised. Self-evaluation documentation is accurate and reflects the high standards and expectations of the school's leaders, managers and members of the governing body. Although members of the school community have confidence in the school's leaders and managers, and members of the governing body fully support the headteacher's aims, it is too early to measure the impact of many of the recently introduced initiatives on pupils' outcomes.

The school values the effective support it has received from the local authority and also appreciates the mutually beneficial working relationship it enjoys with the nearby Hammond Academy.

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

John Daniell
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Raise standards and accelerate pupils' achievement by:
 - sustaining the good quality of learning evident in most lessons
 - ensuring a more effective balance between teachers' input and the time for pupils to work independently
 - providing work which challenges the more able pupils earlier in lessons
 - being more insistent that pupils present their work neatly, using appropriate punctuation

- Extend opportunities for pupils to gain an understanding of cultural diversity by:
 - ensuring this is given a stronger emphasis in the school's promotion of community cohesion
 - providing first-hand experiences for pupils to engage with children from different and diverse backgrounds within the United Kingdom and beyond.