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Mrs J Pickles
Headteacher
Harwood Park Primary School
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Dear Mrs Pickles

Notice to improve: monitoring inspection of Harwood Park Primary School

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 18 October 2011 and for the information which you provided during the inspection. I am grateful to the representatives from the governing body and the local authority for sparing the time to talk with me. It was a pleasure to speak to pupils, so please pass on my thanks to them also. Since the last inspection, the deputy headteacher and a class teacher have left the school, a new deputy headteacher and class teacher have been appointed, one teaching assistant has left, two new governors have joined the governing body and three teachers are new to the age groups they are teaching.

As a result of the inspection on 9 and 10 March 2011, 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 is making satisfactory progress in addressing the issues for improvement and in raising the pupils' achievement.

Unvalidated results of the national assessments and tests in 2011 show that attainment at the end of Year 6 overall remains low, although English results have improved and are now broadly in line with national expectations. Attainment in mathematics remains significantly lower than expected. At the end of Year 2, gains can be seen in the attainment by pupils from the previous year. However, attainment remains significantly lower than expected, due to the low starting points for many children when they enter school. The number of pupils who reach age-related expectations has increased and current data held by the school indicates improvements should continue to be built upon. The progress pupils make has improved and is in line with national expectations. Progress in English has improved considerably and is now significantly higher than expected. Achievement is monitored through a system of tracking which is becoming more secure across the school. Current data held by the school generally show fluctuations in the rates of progress between cohorts and groups of pupils. The school is aware of this and is now, due to more sophisticated tracking procedures, able to intervene more quickly when pupils start to fall behind. A raft of

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intervention programmes have been implemented to support these pupils, which are now more closely aligned to pupils' learning needs. The impact of this work, however, is difficult to evaluate as it remains in its early stages of development.

Pupils talk positively about the increased range of writing opportunities and better links have been made to purposeful writing. Pupils report 'lessons are more fun, but help us learn as well.' Training has been delivered to improve the quality of teaching and learning and a greater focus is given to the teaching of problem-solving in mathematics. The strategies developed to improve pupils' basic skills in writing and problem-solving however, are not used consistently across the school. Pupils are aware of their targets, which are set for reading, writing and mathematics, and the older pupils are aware of their National Curriculum level of attainment in English and mathematics. Improved learning environments support pupils achieving their targets.

The quality of teaching and learning is inconsistent across the school and the headteacher is aware that provision needs to improve further. While senior leaders report an improving picture of teaching and learning, this was not evident during the inspection. In the more effective lessons, targets were referred to and pupils' personal targets were acted upon. Teaching assistants were well deployed to provide timely support for pupils who required extra guidance. However, the inspector also observed lessons which did not fully match activities to the needs of pupils. They were given tasks that neither extended the higher-ability pupils nor supported the lower-ability ones. Activities were not fully using assessment data to ensure pupils maximised learning. When pupils' needs were not fully met, behaviour slipped and was not always suitably managed by teachers. Marking of pupils' work is variable. Some marking guides pupils well to their next stages in learning, and pupils report that they are given time to act upon teachers' advice. However, this is not yet consistently applied across all classes and subjects. The better marking can be seen in literacy, where pupils are clear if they have met the learning intention and are generally informed on how to improve.

The school has worked hard to improve rates of attendance and to reduce the number of pupils who are persistently absent from school. Systems and procedures are now in place and absence is monitored rigorously. Updated newsletters have raised the awareness for parents and carers of the importance to attend school regularly and to be punctual. The local authority is working closely with the pastoral secretary in school and meetings are held on a weekly basis to review rates of attendance. Positive steps have been taken with the pupils to encourage them to attend school regularly, including stickers and membership to the 'spotty dog group!' Attendance rates since September show pupils are attending more regularly, although the attendance of a few pupils remains a concern and the school is aware that this work needs to impact to a greater degree.

The local authority statement of action is fit for purpose. Satisfactory support has been provided through training to improve the quality of teaching and learning. Local authority officers are involved in regular reviews of the school and hold an accurate view of the strengths and weaknesses. Effective steps to strengthen governance have been made. In

liaison with the local authority, the governing body has established a strategic monitoring group which meets regularly to evaluate the school's progress. Helpfully, new governors have pertinent expertise and so are able to provide increased levels of challenge to the school's leaders.

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

Mrs Jane Millward
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in March 2011.

- Improve achievement and raise attainment in English and mathematics by ensuring that:
 - learning activities are suitably challenging and enjoyable for all groups of pupils
 - teachers do not talk for too long before pupils get down to independent or group activities
 - teaching assistants are deployed effectively to support learning
 - marking evaluates the progress pupils have made against their learning targets and guides them on how to improve
 - a whole-school approach is developed to improve pupils' listening skills.

- Improve attendance to at least average levels by:
 - continuing to rigorously follow up persistent absentees and provide them with encouragement and support when they are in school
 - ensuring all measures to improve attendance are consistently and routinely applied.

- Provide pupils with the skills that will prepare them effectively for future economic well-being by:
 - improving attendance and raising attainment
 - helping them to write competently for different purposes
 - providing them with the opportunities to become skilled in mathematical problem-solving
 - enabling them to evaluate their progress against their individual learning targets and hence develop their independent learning skills.