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Mrs K Divey
Headteacher
Hurst Park Primary School
Hurst Road
West Molesey
KT8 1QW

Dear Mrs Divey

Notice to improve: monitoring inspection of Hurst Park Primary School

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 10 October 2012 and for the information that you provided before and during the inspection. Discussions with pupils, staff and members of the governing body were also very helpful in evaluating the progress the school has made. Please pass on my thanks to all concerned for the time they gave to talk to me and for the welcome I received.

There is an additional Reception class this year and the school site has been adapted to accommodate the extra classroom and play space required. Two newly qualified teachers have joined the school in Key Stage 2. One of the newly qualified teachers is covering maternity leave. Two teachers have been promoted to posts of responsibility, one as subject leader for mathematics and the other as leader of the Early Years Foundation Stage. The leadership structure of the school has been changed so that responsibilities are shared more evenly. The deputy headteacher's teaching commitment has been reduced to enable him to take on additional responsibility for assessment.

As a result of the inspection on January 2012, 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 good progress in addressing the issues for improvement and in raising the pupils' achievement.

The headteacher, governing body and senior staff have used the notice to improve as an effective spur to accelerate school improvement and improve achievement for pupils. They have communicated a sense of urgency and high expectation to staff and have made significant changes to teaching and assessment practices. As a result, the overall rate of progress for pupils has accelerated and the gap in

achievement between reading and writing in Key Stage 2 is closing. Evidence from the school's tracking information indicates that progress in writing was at least satisfactory in every year group last year, with pupils in Years 4 and 6 making better than expected progress. The proportion of pupils who attained the expected Level 4 and the higher Level 5 in the end of Key Stage 2 tests in English and mathematics rose significantly in 2012. This positive picture is confirmed by recent work in books, which shows that many pupils have already made progress in writing and mathematics since September.

Systems and procedures to monitor pupils' progress have been reviewed and tightened. Teachers now make half-termly assessments of pupils' progress and data are analysed rigorously to look for any patterns of underachievement. For example, analysis of progress information for 2012 showed that pupils in Year 3 and 4 made less progress in mathematics than in reading and writing. School leaders acted quickly to investigate this issue and found that some staff were less confident in teaching mathematics. As a result, training was arranged and the subject leader for mathematics is revising the school's policy for the teaching of calculation skills to ensure that it provides clear guidance to teachers. Regular meetings have also been introduced so that senior staff can discuss pupils' progress with teachers. Senior staff have correctly identified that there is more to be done to maximise the effectiveness and impact of the meetings and these are currently under review.

Following the restructuring of the leadership team, senior and middle leaders now have more clearly defined roles and all are involved in strategic planning and in monitoring provision. This is strengthening the school's leadership capacity. The governing body has increased its involvement in monitoring and evaluating the work of the school. Focus groups of governors systematically monitor the school's progress in addressing the key issues from the previous inspection and provide robust challenge to school leaders.

Rigorous and accurate monitoring of teaching and learning has had a positive impact on the overall quality of teaching so that more teaching is now consistently good or better. Senior and middle leaders carry out a wide range of monitoring activities. These include visits to lessons and scrutiny of pupils' workbooks and teachers' planning. Newly qualified staff have an individual mentor and are well supported. Senior leaders evaluate the strengths and weaknesses in lessons and give detailed feedback to staff. They agree action points with teachers that are followed up later. Teachers have visited partner schools to observe good and outstanding practice and have worked with consultants from the local authority. Teachers support each other well and, although the pace of change has been demanding, morale is high.

The quality of planning has improved. Teachers show on their plans what different groups of pupils will learn in the lesson. In most lessons seen during the monitoring inspection, tasks were pitched at an appropriate level for different groups of learners and the pace of learning was brisk. More able pupils say that the work set for them to complete independently is generally quite challenging and older pupils really enjoy

working in the separate mathematics extension group, but they still find that the pace of learning is too slow in whole-class introductions led by the teacher. This is because teachers do not ask enough questions that extend more able learners.

Marking now provides good guidance to pupils on their next steps in learning and teachers ensure that pupils are given time in lessons to review their learning and correct mistakes. It is clear that the profile of writing has been raised across the school. There are displays celebrating good achievement in writing in classrooms and pupils' books show an increased focus on providing meaningful opportunities for writing in English and in other curriculum subjects. The standard of presentation is mainly good, but there is still not a consistent expectation with regard to spelling and too many pupils misspell key vocabulary when writing. The school has a large number of skilled teaching assistants who provide good support to groups or individuals in lessons. Nevertheless, they are not always deployed effectively when the teacher is working with the whole class at the start and end of lessons.

The local authority's statement of action has been evaluated and meets requirements. The support provided by the local authority has been particularly effective in building the capacity of the governing body, and of senior and middle leaders in the school. Local authority consultants have led whole-school training that has improved teachers' subject knowledge and confidence. They have also provided individual teachers with more tailored support to raise the overall quality of teaching. Additional support provided through partnerships with two local schools has also contributed to improving leadership and provision.

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

Melanie Knowles

Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in January 2012

- Increase the impact of leaders and managers at all levels in improving teaching and pupils' progress by December 2012 by:
 - rigorously evaluating information about the progress of groups of pupils so that school developments are more sharply focused on areas of greatest need in teaching and learning
 - ensuring that the monitoring of teaching and learning provides clear guidance to teachers about where improvement is needed and how it is to be achieved rapidly.

- Raise the proportion of good or better teaching to at least 75% by December 2012, focusing especially on Years 3 to 6, by:
 - ensuring that teachers have clear expectations for what pupils of differing ability should learn in each lesson
 - providing enough challenge, especially for more able pupils, during whole-class work
 - making sure that teachers' marking shows pupils how to improve and that advice given is followed up swiftly by the pupils.

- Improve progress in writing in Key Stage 2, so that the gap in pupils' achievement between reading and writing is narrowed by December 2012 by:
 - expecting pupils to always produce written work of high quality
 - involving pupils more in correcting their spelling, grammar and punctuation
 - providing guidance on how to improve writing and offer more opportunities for pupils to practice their writing skills in different subjects.