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Ms Sylvie Libson
Executive Headteacher
Furness Primary School
Furness Road
London
NW10 5YT

Dear Ms Libson

Notice to improve: monitoring inspection of Furness Primary School

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 25 October 2012 and for the information which you provided during the inspection. Could you also convey my thanks to the Chair of the Governing Body, the pupils and the representative from the local authority that I spoke to by telephone.

In September 2012 the school was federated with a local outstanding primary school. The headteacher of the local school has been appointed as the executive headteacher of Furness. She is a national leader of education. The governing body of the federation governs both schools. Also in September, a deputy headteacher and two teachers were appointed.

As a result of the inspection on 8 March 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.

At the end of the last academic year the attainment of pupils in Year 6 rose considerably. In 2011, the proportion of pupils who attained Level 4 and Level 5 in the National Curriculum test results was well below the national average. Results for pupils in Year 2 also marginally improved. There was good improvement in this year for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage; results reflect that children's skills are now in line with national expectations. Evidence seen in lessons and data from the school suggest that current attainment for all years has risen significantly. There is excellent use of pupil attainment data by senior leaders to identify where pupils require extra support. Every child's achievement is known by leaders. Pupils respond well to the tasks they are given in lessons. They have good opportunities to discuss

their learning with their partners which helps them make faster progress. In a Year 1 numeracy lesson, pupils were tasked with estimating and measuring the size of objects using the span of their hands; they worked very well in partnerships and developed their use of relevant terms for mathematical measurement effectively. Partners are also used well to support pupils at the early stages of learning English to reinforce their understanding of their work. There are good intervention strategies to support these pupils which vary from in-class support to small-group tuition. There are few instances where pupils are charged to work independently.

Teaching over time is improving quickly. Good teaching was seen in phonics lessons stressing the sounds that letters make. Teachers use their time well to develop pupils' essential reading and writing skills. A common characteristic of lessons seen is the fast pace and the sense of urgency by teachers. Teachers make sound use of the good pupil assessment information to initially plan their lessons. However, planning is not always detailed enough to ensure that the needs of the most able pupils are fully addressed. These pupils are sometimes left waiting for further guidance as they have finished work early. Tasks are sometimes pitched at lower and average ability pupils. Assessment of pupils learning in lessons is undertaken well by teachers. There are examples where teachers make correct adjustments to the pace or reinforce learning by modelling examples based on their assessment of how well pupils were tackling their tasks. The well-thought through probing questions asked by teachers contribute well to the pupils' good progress. For example, in a Year 6 lesson they were asked to transform a narrative into a play; the teacher's questions resulted in pupils using good examples of relevant adverbs and adjectives. Teachers' use of questioning is building on pupils' learning and deepening their understanding of their work. Pupils are generally directed well in their work. However, in a less successful lesson, they were unclear of what they should have achieved by the end of the lesson. This affected their levels of motivation and resulted in a few pupils misbehaving. Work is marked regularly and some is of a high standard. Where work is marked well, comments are clear and informative and pupils know what they need to do to improve. However, some work is marked with few comments or guidance. Generally teachers are not checking that pupils have responded to their comments. Teaching assistants are contributing well to pupils' achievement in lessons and are supporting learning well. Pupils say they work harder since the last inspection and that work is more challenging with good support from teachers. The creative curriculum is appreciated by pupils. It provides good opportunities for links to be made across subjects especially mathematics and English.

Many pupils say behaviour has improved since the last inspection. They say they are well supported and that the senior leaders spend a lot of time in the playground. They know who to talk to if they have any concerns. There is a general awareness of bullying although some pupils were not aware of the different forms of bullying. Fixed-term exclusions have fallen; this has been helped by the clear direction from the senior leadership team to reinforce the message that behaviour management is

the responsibility of all staff. Attendance was low at the last inspection; it has risen well to a broadly average position at the end of the summer term.

Highly effective actions by the senior leaders have stopped the considerable underachievement of pupils. The good improvements in attainment, teaching and middle leadership have contributed well to this. The executive headteacher, supported by the extremely able deputy headteacher, has galvanised the staff into positive action. The executive headteacher stated that rightly the focus has been on teaching and assessment. Robust monitoring of attainment has been successful in ensuring that every teacher is responsible for their pupils' progress. A well-devised creative curriculum is making a positive difference to pupils' level of enjoyment and is also strengthening their skills in core subjects. The partnership work with the outstanding school has raised teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve and improved teaching across the school. All members of the interim executive board and most of the governors of the outstanding school have remained on the federated governing body. There is a clear strategic focus of the new governing body which is challenging and supporting the school well. The support provided by the local authority has been pivotal to the school's success so far. The statement of action has been the primary focus and has served the school well in improving outcomes; it is both challenging and realistic.

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
Samantha Morgan-Price
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Raise attainment in reading, writing and mathematics so that by July 2012, it is at least in line with the national average by the time pupils leave school, by:
 - developing pupils' ability to learn independently
 - improving intervention strategies for pupils at the early stages of learning to speak English
 - ensuring that, through careful marking, pupils understand the next steps to improve their learning and to raise the standard of their work
 - creating opportunities for pupils to apply their mathematical skills across the curriculum.
- Improve teaching to provide continuously good learning by:
 - using assessment to tailor planned learning tasks more closely to the needs of pupils, including those of higher ability
 - ensuring teachers check on pupils' progress during lessons and amend tasks if needed
 - embedding the use of high-quality questioning that engages all pupils and extends their thinking
 - ensuring instructions to pupils are clear.