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8 February 2013

Mrs Tunay Hussein  
Principal  
Noel Park Primary School  
Gladstone Avenue  
London  
N22 6LH

Dear Mrs Hussein

### **No formal designation monitoring inspection of Noel Park Primary School**

Following my visit with John Seal, Her Majesty's Inspector, to your academy on 6 and 7 February 2013, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings.

The inspection was a monitoring inspection carried out in accordance with no formal designation procedures and conducted under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was carried out because the academy's predecessor school was judged to be a school causing concern.

### **Evidence**

Inspectors observed the academy's work, scrutinised documents and met with the Principal, vice principal, staff with leadership responsibilities, the vice chair of the governing body and two representatives of the academy's sponsor, the Academies Enterprise Trust. They spoke informally with other staff and pupils during the course of the inspection. Many lesson observations were carried out jointly with the Principal and vice principal.

Having considered all the evidence, I am of the opinion that at this time the academy is not making enough progress in raising standards for all pupils.

### **Context**

With 584 on roll, the academy is larger than most primary schools. Pupils come from a range of minority ethnic groups with the largest groups being of White, Black African or Black Caribbean heritage. A small proportion are White British. A high

proportion speak English as an additional language, including a number who arrive from other countries with little knowledge and understanding of English. In all, 43 different languages are spoken in the school. A high proportion of pupils are included in the school's register of special educational needs although the proportion at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is broadly average. Many pupils join the school or leave it at various times through the year. A much larger than average number of pupils are known to be eligible for free school meals and therefore receive pupil premium funding. This is additional funding from the government. The Nursery has 15 full-time places funded by the local authority, a small number of places for parents and carers who pay and the remaining children, approximately 51, attend part time.

The school became an academy in September 2012 following the closure of the predecessor school of the same name. It is sponsored by the Academies Enterprise Trust. All staff from the predecessor school transferred to the academy. In total, four teachers are new to the school. One member of staff is on long-term absence and another resigned during the autumn term. Both are covered by staff on a temporary contract. The make-up of the governing body changed slightly and there are now fewer governors in total.

### **Achievement of pupils at the academy**

Many children join the Nursery or the Reception Year with lower levels of knowledge and less experience than typical for their age. They are catching up quickly but language and communication skills are weak. The school's information shows that attainment in reading, writing and mathematics is below age-related expectations in all year groups. In some year groups, for example Year 4 and Year 5, pupils have a long way to go to meet national expectations. The picture is more positive in Year 6 where more and more pupils are working at, or close to, the levels they should be.

There is a very mixed and inconsistent picture of pupils' progress across the school. The rates of progress between classes in the same year group and between subjects in the same class are very varied. There are differences in the progress of boys and girls and between those who are eligible for pupil premium and those that are not. Pupils' progress is most consistent and most rapid in the Early Years Foundation Stage and in Year 6. There are signs that some pupils with special educational needs are making reasonable gains through following specific programmes of support taught by support assistants but this is not always the case. Such variability in pupils' progress was evident in the lessons observed and in the pupils' work. Pupils in the early stages of learning English are making good progress in learning to speak the language. Older pupils are also supported well, both in class lessons and in small focused groups, to read and write in English.

Pupils spend more time learning about the links between the letters of the alphabet and the sounds that they represent (phonics) and practising their reading skills than they did in the past. The success, or otherwise, of such sessions depends on the

quality of the activities that are given to the pupils who are not working directly with the teacher or another adult. The school's focus on improving pupils' writing skills is, by and large, having a positive impact. Pupils are enthusiastic writers. Teachers help pupils to structure their writing in a logical sequence and encourage them to use more interesting words. Some pupils are not moving on as quickly as they need to because they are not given clear enough guidance from teachers about how to improve their writing. In mathematics, pupils are taught appropriate mathematical knowledge and strategies but do not always make the rapid progress needed to catch up on previous gaps. In lessons, they do not always have enough opportunities to talk about the strategies they use and what they understand.

### **The quality of teaching**

The Principal's monitoring of teaching shows a full range of quality – a variable picture that is similar to that seen by inspectors. While there are many good features, such as the positive relationships between pupils and adults, too much teaching requires improvement because some fundamental weaknesses hold back pupils' learning. Teachers work hard at their lesson planning, which is often detailed. Planning is shared between teachers in the year group to make sure that pupils in the same year group get similar experiences and activities. However, individual teachers do not always adapt these plans enough to take account of what their pupils already know and can do. Teachers have had training about the features of good teaching but sometimes follow this like a recipe without adapting it enough to the circumstances and needs of the pupils in their class.

Where teaching has the most impact, teachers' expectations are high. Practical and relevant activities capture pupils' enthusiasm and there are moments that grab pupils' attention and amaze them. Getting pupils to check their own work, or that of a classmate, against a list of criteria is a positive feature of many writing lessons. It helps pupils to understand what makes a good piece of writing and helps them to see what to improve. Opportunities for pupils to discuss their ideas with a partner generally work well. By contrast, teachers do too much of the talking at times. Here, pupils have too little chance to learn from each other and/or too little time to practise the skill they are expected to learn.

The quality of marking is too variable and does not consistently match the academy's policy or agreed practice. While some is exemplary, much is irregular or cursory and does little to help pupils to improve. Some pupils' books have page after page that has not been marked at all; this is simply unacceptable. Where marking is thorough and helpful, pupils do not always respond to the comments.

The wide range of activities planned for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage helps them to develop their knowledge and skills across all areas of learning. There is a good focus on developing children's communication skills. Records of children's learning based on adults' observations are developing well. A particularly positive feature is the way that staff encourage parents and carers to be involved in their children's learning.

## **Behaviour and safety of pupils**

In many ways, the behaviour of pupils is a strength of the school. They are polite and well mannered to visitors and respond well to clear instructions from teachers. Their positive attitudes contribute much to their learning. They say they feel safe in school and that the system of sanctions and rewards works well. There is little bullying, and the rare instance of racist behaviour is tackled rigorously. Pupils embrace the diversity of their peers and mix well socially.

Attendance figures are average and most pupils are punctual. The number of pupils who are absent frequently is reducing all the time. Much of this improvement is the result of the exemplary work of the outreach team whose members liaise with various agencies within and across boroughs to support pupils and families who face challenges in their lives. In this team, management systems work well to enable staff to target resources where they are needed. There is a level of rigour in the way that policies and procedures are followed that could serve as a model for other areas of the school's work.

## **The quality of leadership in and management of the academy**

Self-evaluation is broadly accurate and the academy's action plans identify the right kinds of priorities. The Principal and vice principal are aware of the school's strengths and weaknesses in broad terms. However, their view of the quality of teaching overall is too generous. This is because it is based too much on information from classroom observations without taking enough account of the impact of teaching over time using evidence from information about the rates of pupils' progress and the evidence from their books. There is an increasing role for other staff with leadership responsibilities in checking whether or not actions have had the intended effect on improving the quality of provision. However, pupils' work and teachers' planning and marking are not checked frequently enough or rigorously enough to make sure that all staff follow agreed procedures at all times.

There is a lack of clarity among staff with leadership responsibilities about their accountability for the quality of the work of the staff they lead. For example, phase leaders are not clear about their responsibility for the quality of the provision in their phases. Subject leaders are not sure of their accountability for improving standards in their subjects across the school. Such accountability is not set out clearly as part of job descriptions. The Principal and vice principal are not rigorous enough in holding these staff to account for their part in the academy's improvement.

There was a delay in setting up the academy's governing body while the Academies Enterprise Trust interviewed governors for their role. This meant that no checks were kept of statutory policies, such as those for equalities and safeguarding, and other statutory duties were not undertaken during the autumn term. The governing body did not meet until January 2013 to begin to undertake its governance duties.

Given these weaknesses across the different layers of leadership, the academy is not well placed to make the rapid progress that is required.

### **External support**

Directors from the Academies Enterprise Trust have provided much-needed challenge to the school's leaders through regular meetings. Support was provided for the personnel and finance issues associated with the move to academy status. Some support from consultants for subject leaders has helped them to evaluate the features and standards in their subject. However, there have not been enough practical support, guidance and resources to improve the quality of teaching and learning at the academy. Some support from an outstanding school in a neighbouring authority has been arranged to help improve the quality of teaching. This joint work is in the early stages of development and needs to be stepped up.

### **Priorities for further improvement**

- Improve the consistency in the quality of teaching by ensuring that all staff follow agreed policies.
- Ensure that all leaders and managers, including the governing body, are systematic in their approach to checking the quality of provision and holding staff to account for their part in the academy's rapid improvement.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State for Education, the Chair of the Governing Body and the Academies Advisers Unit at the Department for Education. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Jane Wotherspoon  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**