



15 March 2006

Mrs Shanthi Ravi Varma  
Headteacher  
Springfield Community Primary School  
Castlewood Road  
Hackney  
N16 6DH

Dear Mrs Ravi Varma

## **FRESH START: MONITORING INSPECTION OF SPRINGFIELD COMMUNITY PRIMARY SCHOOL**

### **Introduction**

Following my visit to your school on 1 and 2 March 2006, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the first monitoring inspection since the school opened in September 2005.

This letter will be published on the Ofsted website. Please inform the Regional Inspection Service Provider of any factual inaccuracies within 24 hours of the receipt of this letter.

### **Evidence**

HMI observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher and deputy headteacher, nominated staff, the chair of governors and a representative from the Hackney Learning Trust.

### **Context**

Springfield Community Primary School opened in September 2005. It was established in the building of the former Craven Park Primary School, from which pupils automatically transferred to the new school. A building programme is planned but work has not yet begun to provide improved accommodation for the new school. Only one member of the teaching staff of the predecessor school moved to Springfield when it opened. The school is smaller than average, with a roll of 189 pupils. The percentage of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals is well above average. Over half the pupils speak English as an additional language. There is an above

average proportion of pupils identified as having special educational needs. A significant number of pupils have joined or left the school during this academic year. The school has experienced difficulties in recruiting appropriately qualified teachers but permanent appointments have been made to fill the two current vacancies for the beginning of the summer term 2006.

### **Achievement and standards**

The pupils' attainment on entry to the school is well below national expectations for their age group and standards in literacy and numeracy are well below nationally expected levels in each key stage. No statutory tests or assessments have taken place since the school's opening at the start of the present academic year. If the school's targets for the 2006 Key Stage 2 national tests are met, attainment will be significantly below the most recent national figures.

In six of eight lessons during this monitoring visit, the pupils' progress was at least satisfactory and in one it was good. At times, the pupils' progress lagged behind the quality of the teaching because there were significant gaps in their prior knowledge and understanding and because many have not developed good learning habits over time. They found difficulty in working independently and in collaborating productively in groups, where the more confident individuals tended to dominate activities, allowing the diffident pupils to opt out or to continue with tasks in isolation. Speaking and listening skills were generally below expected levels and few pupils made use of the ideas and suggestions of their peers to extend their own understanding. The pupils made better progress when there was a systematic approach to the development of their speaking and thinking skills.

Of the 88 parents and carers who responded to a recent questionnaire, 15% expressed some concern about the use of homework and 14% about the progress of their children more generally.

### **Personal development and well-being**

The pupils' behaviour in classrooms and around the school site is satisfactory overall although in one lesson it was unacceptable; in two others there was some distracting behaviour, a degree of restlessness and a tendency among a few pupils to call out answers during whole class oral work. However, the pupils themselves reported that behaviour has improved since the school opened and that they enjoy school more as a result. They also spoke positively about the range of activities provided for them outside lessons. Relationships between adults and pupils are generally positive and the staff

work hard to develop the pupils' levels of confidence. Pupils are encouraged to take responsibility within the community, for example through the work of the School Council. The great majority of the 88 parents and carers who responded to the recent survey of their opinions believed that behaviour at the school is good but five disagreed and eight did not believe that their children were free from bullying and harassment.

The staff are aware that work needs to be done in improving the skills in literacy, numeracy and independent learning which will contribute to the pupils' future economic well being. Attendance has improved to 94 per cent; this is above the LA target for the school but below the national figure. One pupil has been excluded on a fixed term basis since the school opened.

### **Quality of provision**

In seven of eight lessons during this monitoring visit the teaching and learning were at least satisfactory and in one, the teaching was outstanding. At best, the teachers' planning identified clear learning objectives and made provision for pupils' differing levels of attainment and need. The learning climate was positive and several teachers made use of a good range of behaviour management skills. In one particularly effective lesson, the pace of learning and the variety of learning activities were calculated to sustain the pupils' interest and to enable them all to make progress in ways best suited to their needs. There were examples of good use of resources, including the interactive whiteboards.

There were also weaknesses in the teaching and learning, including some in lessons which were broadly satisfactory; not enough the teaching was good or better. In some lessons, the teaching had several strengths but there was too much tolerance of distracting behaviour so that the progress of some pupils was slower than it might have been. Some activities were unduly protracted and in particular, pupils were required at times to spend too long sitting and listening on the carpet so that they began to lose focus and to distract each other. The role of teaching assistants was not always specified in lesson plans nor was reference made to the individual targets of pupils who have learning difficulties. The quality of marking was mixed; at best it gave helpful pointers to enable pupils to improve future work but in other cases it was cursory and offered praise but little guidance.

The weekly teaching time is in line with government recommendations at each key stage. The National Curriculum is implemented but the governing body has yet to meet in full its obligations in respect of provision for sex and relationships education. The senior staff are aware that work remains to be done in ensuring continuity and progression in the curricular planning; the

further development of the curriculum is a priority within the Raising Attainment Plan.

Assessment and tracking systems are developing appropriately but the use of assessment in planning for future learning is not yet consistently embedded in teachers' practice so that the needs of pupils of differing levels of attainment are not always fully met. The newly appointed staff since September know the pupils well and have worked hard to develop links with parents and with external agencies to promote the progress and well-being of individuals.

### **Leadership and management**

The headteacher and the senior staff form a cohesive team and have a clear and shared view of the future direction of the school. The Raising Attainment Plan identifies an appropriate range of priorities and tasks, together with suitably sharp and measurable success criteria. The timescales are often long and there are places where the inclusion of milestones would be helpful in enabling the school to evaluate progress on an interim basis. Arrangements for the monitoring and evaluation of the school's performance by senior managers are systematic and include a good range of methods, including measures to elicit the views of pupils. The records of the work to date indicate that weaknesses as well as strengths are being identified and addressed. The Self-Evaluation Form is thorough and helpful but the school does not provide enough evidence of improvement in the pupils' achievement to support its judgement that its overall effectiveness is now good.

Subject co-ordinators are still developing their roles. Some are at an early stage in the process, both in management skills and in subject knowledge in relation to their areas of responsibility. The governing body is committed and supportive and has appropriate channels of communication to enable members to inform themselves about the work of the school and to monitor its progress. There is a helpful range of skills and experience among the membership. Overall, leadership and management are satisfactory and the progress made by the school since its opening indicates that its capacity to improve is also satisfactory.

### **External support**

A broad range of partnerships is developing with other schools and with external organisations with expertise which is helpful in promoting the Every Child Matters agenda. The staff have worked hard to forge improved links with parents and carers through encouraging their attendance at a variety of school events, a family learning programme and systematic canvassing of

their views. The staff report that parental support is good and that attendance at school events is rising. Shortly before this monitoring visit, questionnaires were sent to parents and the rate of return was good. Of parents and carers responding, approximately five in eight were wholly positive in their views of the school and its provision.

Staff have valued the guidance and support which has been provided by the Hackney Learning Trust in curricular areas, including literacy and numeracy, and in the monitoring and development of the quality of teaching and learning more generally. Work remains to be done to ensure that a higher proportion of the teaching is good or better, to promote more consistently effective behaviour management in some classrooms and to enhance the skills and role of the subject co-ordinators. The school reports that there has been no external support to date for the teaching of science.

## **Main Judgements**

The school's overall progress has been satisfactory.

## **Priorities for further improvement**

- improve the quality of teaching and learning so that more is good or outstanding
- explore ways of improving the pupils' listening and learning skills and ensure that the teachers' planning focuses more consistently upon how the pupils will learn as well as upon the intended activities
- develop the teachers' skills in behaviour management in order to eliminate the distracting behaviour in lessons of a few individuals
- develop the management skills and role of the subject co-ordinators.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the chair of governors and the Director of Learning and Standards for Hackney.

Yours sincerely

Caroline Bolton  
**H M Inspector**