



15 December 2006

Mrs Shanthi Ravi Varma
The 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 6 and 7 December 2006, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the third 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, nominated members of staff, the chair of governors and a representative from the Hackney Learning Trust. It was not possible during this visit to observe lessons in Year 6 as they were away on a residential school visit.

Context

Information about the context of the school since its opening as a Fresh Start school in September 2005 was included in the first monitoring letter in March 2006. Much of the school accommodation is tired and unwelcoming and the Foundation Stage area offers very limited space for early years activities. At the time of the last inspection it was reported that building work was not expected to begin until spring 2007. The school now anticipates that building

will not start until the 2007 summer holidays. The school is currently dealing with staffing difficulties, including long-term sickness and a permanent vacancy from the beginning of next term which it has so far been unable to fill.

Achievement and standards

In summer 2006, the school's results in the national tests were mixed. At Key Stage 1, about three quarters of the Year 2 pupils achieved Level 2, the standard expected for their age, in reading. In mathematics, the proportion was over nine in 10 but in writing it was only about a third. No pupils reached the higher Level 3 in writing or mathematics. At Key Stage 2, three quarters of the pupils gained the expected Level 4 or above in English and mathematics, while in science the figure was over eight in 10. The school exceeded its targets for achievement at Level 4 or above in English and in mathematics. A quarter of pupils achieved the higher Level 5 in English; in science the proportion was one in five but in mathematics it was less than one in ten. Nevertheless the school exceeded its targets for attainment at Level 5 or above.

In six of eight lessons observed, the pupils' progress was at least satisfactory. Where achievement is good, pupils have a clear idea of what is expected of them and the resources, tasks and support provided are well matched to their needs. In lessons in which progress was inadequate, the work lacked challenge for some pupils but was too difficult for others, who became discouraged and were unable to achieve the intended learning objectives. In some classes, the pupils' presentation of their written work is unsatisfactory; books are untidy, work is incomplete or basic rules have been ignored. In these instances, attainment in writing is lower than it should be.

The school's assessment data show a considerable variation in the progress made during the present term by pupils in different classes. These data indicate that progress is strongest in Year 6, although prior attainment in this year group is low. Standards are at their weakest in Year 3, particularly in mathematics.

Personal development and well-being

As at the time of the last monitoring inspection, the pupils' behaviour around the building and play areas is satisfactory. In seven of eight lessons seen, behaviour was at least satisfactory. When activities are suitably challenging, the pace of learning is brisk and teachers are both firm and consistent in their approach to behaviour management, the pupils enjoy their work and behave well. When activities are unduly prolonged or the pupils do not understand

what is required of them, their concentration soon lapses. In most classes, pupils are confident speakers but some are diffident and have limited social skills. Many are very dependent on adult support and when asked to work without direct supervision, they often lack the confidence to persevere in the face of difficulties. The school is working to develop the pupils' confidence and independence by providing a good range of opportunities for them to take responsibility and to contribute to the community. Activities include fund-raising, caring for the school environment and participation in the school council.

The most recent attendance figure for the school is 91.8 per cent; this is lower than in the first half of the present term, when the figure was 94 per cent. There has been only one fixed-term exclusion in the last year.

Of 39 respondents to a parents' questionnaire which the school distributed just before this monitoring visit, all but three believe that pupils behave well.

- Improve the pupils' concentration and their skills in listening and learning; ensure that the teachers' planning focuses more consistently upon how the pupils will learn as well as upon the intended activities. Work remains to be done but progress has been satisfactory.

Quality of provision

Since the time of the last monitoring visit, the school has experienced staffing difficulties arising from circumstances beyond its control.

In eight lessons observed during this monitoring visit, the quality of teaching was at least satisfactory in six and good in two. The best lessons are well planned to include a good range of learning activities and resources. The ratio of adults to pupils is very favourable across the school and when appropriately deployed, the teaching assistants provide helpful support for the pupils' learning and personal development. The school has two bilingual teaching assistants who make an effective contribution to the progress of pupils for whom English is an additional language.

Where teaching is most effective, there is a strong and appropriate emphasis upon developing the pupils' skills in speaking and in listening, as well as their attainment in literacy. Classroom talk is carefully planned and structured. As at the time of the last monitoring visit, there is some good modelling by teachers of subject-specific vocabulary. Questioning is used well and targeted, to ensure that all pupils, including the less confident, take part in discussion. In most classrooms, behaviour management is firm and

consistent so that pupils know what is expected of them and they respond accordingly.

There are still weaknesses in the teaching. Marking remains uneven in quality and in the degree to which it enables pupils to understand how to improve their work. During lessons, pupils who lose concentration are not always called promptly back to the task in hand. While teachers' planning has improved in the last year, the extent to which activities, resources and support are planned to meet the pupils' differing needs remains inconsistent and particularly in subjects other than literacy and numeracy. Learning objectives for lessons are not always sharply focused or matched to the pupils' differing needs and they are sometimes confused with the activities planned.

The school has appropriate systems for assessing and tracking pupils' progress over time; the challenge now is to ensure that all staff make effective use of these data in planning the pupils' learning.

The school provides helpful out-of-hours provision, including a breakfast club and extended day clubs, for which it draws on its developing partnerships with other schools. Returns of the parental questionnaire, distributed by the school, indicate that the extended day clubs are appreciated by parents and carers.

- Continue to improve the quality of teaching and learning so that a still higher proportion is good or outstanding. There has been no increase in the proportion of teaching which is good or better and progress since the last inspection has therefore been inadequate on this issue.

Leadership and management

The headteacher has a clear vision for the future development of the school and the senior team works as a coherent unit. The staff generally work with a shared sense of purpose to improve the school. Systems are in place to monitor and evaluate the Raising Attainment Plan and for checking on the quality of teaching and learning. Weaknesses as well as strengths are identified in the monitoring of the teaching by managers. School self-evaluation is detailed but it is weighted towards positive developments; it does not always identify with equal clarity the areas of concern. For example the variations between pupils' progress in different year groups and their implications for the school's evaluation of achievement and standards are not analysed thoroughly.

The role of the subject and area leaders in the monitoring of progress in their areas of responsibility has continued to develop satisfactorily since the last monitoring visit. Work remains to be done to ensure that achievement in each subject is consistently good or better across the school.

The chair of the governing body has a clear view of the challenges which face the school and evaluates its work rigorously and accurately.

The school has made progress in a number of areas since it opened and has therefore demonstrated a capacity to improve. Its further improvement depends upon its ability to resolve the current staffing issues, to continue to improve the quality of the teaching and learning and to analyse and address rigorously the areas in need of improvement, as well as the strengths on which it can build.

- Develop further the management skills and role of the subject co-ordinators, particularly in the monitoring and evaluation of the work in their areas. Satisfactory progress.

External support

The school has had support from the Hackney Learning Trust in subject specific areas, as well as in aspects of leadership and management. This support has been received positively by the school. Staff also work with a suitable range of external professionals in promoting the pupils' welfare. The school continues to develop a very useful network of relations with partner schools and other organisations to improve the provision within and beyond the school day.

Main Judgements

The school's overall progress is satisfactory.

Priorities for further improvement

- Continue to improve teaching and learning so that more of it is good and outstanding.
- Ensure that lesson planning makes good use of assessment information to meet the full range of the pupils' needs and to raise attainment.
- Continue to improve the pupils' speaking, listening, concentration and learning skills.

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

Yours sincerely

Caroline Bolton
H M Inspector