

29 March 2007

Mrs Shanthi Ravi Varma
Headteacher
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Castlewood Road
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N16 6DH

Dear Mrs Ravi Varma

FRESH START: MONITORING INSPECTION OF SPRINGFIELD COMMUNITY SCHOOL

Introduction

Following my visit with Graham Warner, Additional Inspector, to your school on 21 March 2007, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the fourth 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, the deputy headteacher, the advanced skills teacher providing support in the Foundation Stage, the chair of governors and a representative from the Hackney Learning Trust.

Context

As at the time of the last monitoring inspection, the school is dealing with staffing changes. The post of Foundation Stage co-ordinator has been vacant since Christmas and it has not yet proved possible to make a suitable appointment. Two classes are currently taught by temporary members of staff.

It was reported in the last monitoring letter that the new building programme is scheduled to begin in the summer holidays this year. It is not expected to be completed by the start of the academic year 2007-8, which means that the Fresh Start school will have been open for over two years before the new accommodation is ready. The Foundation Stage area in particular is a poor learning base for small children in its layout, its limited space and its tired appearance, despite the best efforts of the staff to improve it.

Achievement and standards

Since the last monitoring visit, the school's current RAISEonline report has become available from Ofsted. This indicates that in 2006, standards at key stages 1 and 2 were significantly below average. However, over Key Stage 2, when contextual factors are taken into account, the progress of pupils for whom data are available was significantly above average in English and broadly in line in science and mathematics. These data should be viewed with caution as the pupils concerned had been in the new school for only a year and the year group consisted of 25 pupils. This summer, the school anticipates that fewer Year 6 pupils than last year will achieve the expected Level 4 in the statutory tests, because of the lower prior attainment of the year group, which is again very small in number. The school tracks carefully the progress of individuals and of groups of pupils so that there is clear information available to class teachers and to senior staff about where action is needed to tackle potential underachievement.

In each of the nine part lessons seen, the pupils' progress was at least satisfactory, in five it was good and in one it was outstanding. In most lessons, pupils understood well what they were expected to learn and could explain to inspectors what they were doing and why. Most, but not all, pupils spoken to could say what their personal targets are. In the best lessons, they took considerable pride in their work and wanted to talk about it to the visitors. The school has a very good level of adult support for pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities or behavioural problems and teaching assistants generally make a strong contribution to their progress. However, the progress of the most able is generally weaker than that of other groups; in some lessons, they were expected to do more work than their peers, rather than tackling more demanding tasks and resources. In the Foundation Stage, pupils are making good progress.

The staff have worked hard to improve pupils' speaking and listening skills and their levels of concentration and, while much remains to be done, there are signs that this is having a positive impact. Attainment in oracy is still below national expectations but most teachers and support staff ensure that pupils remain focused on the task in hand. In the best lessons there is good

practice in the use of questioning which is targeted at individuals to bring them by name into discussion.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the monitoring inspection in December 2006:

- Continue to improve the pupils' speaking, listening, concentration and learning skills - good progress

Personal development and well-being

Pupils' behaviour in lessons was good overall in the lessons observed during this visit; their concentration was good in most lessons but only satisfactory in others. Where activities are suitably varied and challenging, pupils enjoy their work, remain focused and behave very well. The school has made it a priority to develop the speaking and listening skills of children in the Foundation Stage, and the higher levels of confidence in speaking among pupils in the present Year 1 may well be an outcome of this work.

Across the school, however, pupils are very dependent on adult support and many lack the confidence to persevere alone with challenging or unfamiliar tasks. The staff are taking action to address the issue. There is a growing range of opportunities for pupils to take responsibility and make a contribution to the wider community, for example in the school's fund raising activities and the pupils' decision-making in the school council. The pupils are encouraged to develop a range of skills through the "buddy" system and their efforts are recognised through a helpful system of rewards.

The recent attendance figure for the school is 95.4%, which exceeds the school's target of 95% and is a significant improvement on the previous term's figure of 91.8%. There have been two fixed term exclusions this term. The school recognises that work remains to be done but personal development and well-being are satisfactory overall.

Quality of provision

In all of the nine part lessons seen, the teaching and learning were at least satisfactory, in five they were good and in one outstanding. Classroom management has improved over time and teachers are more consistent in their implementation of the school's behaviour policy. Relationships between adults and pupils are positive and rewards and encouragement are used to good effect. Staff have worked hard to improve pupils' concentration and

listening by planning activities designed to engage their interest and intervening rapidly when their attention wanders. Interactive whiteboards are often well used but during this visit the display on screens was not always clearly visible at the back of the classroom when there was strong sunlight. There is more good practice in the teaching of speaking skills than in the past, suggesting that the use of open-ended questions, modelling by teachers of subject vocabulary and drawing pupils into discussion by name, are aspects of good practice which have been disseminated among the staff. Teachers generally have a secure understanding of the attainment of the pupils and teaching assistants are effective in their support for targeted individuals.

In the Foundation Stage, teaching is good and staff are effectively deployed to meet the needs of the children. An advanced skills teacher provides focused and regular support in the Foundation Stage. The staff have worked diligently to create an attractive learning environment but the poor accommodation makes it difficult for them to provide the broad range of activities appropriate for children of this age. Foundation Stage staff collaborate effectively as team units within classes but there is more work to be done to develop this approach across the Key Stage. The school recognises that the use of assessment outcomes in planning is an area for further development in the Foundation Stage.

There remain some weaker aspects of the teaching in the school as a whole. At best, the marking provides pupils with helpful information to enable them to improve their work but some is still too cursory to be useful. Planning does not always take full account of the needs of the most able pupils. Some models of literacy in display and notices are inaccurate so that pupils are given wrong information, for example about the use of apostrophes and sentence punctuation. There is still a tendency in lesson planning to confuse learning objectives with intended activities.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the monitoring inspection in December 2006:

- Continue to improve teaching and learning so that more of it is good and outstanding - good progress
- Ensure that lesson planning makes good use of assessment information to meet the full range of the pupils' needs and to raise attainment - satisfactory progress

Leadership and management

The school evaluates the quality of leadership and management as satisfactory overall and inspectors agree. The school acknowledges that the management skills of subject co-ordinators are variable and that more development is needed in this area. Teaching and learning are monitored systematically, and weaknesses as well as strengths are identified, although written records of lesson observations do not always give a clear judgement about the progress made by the pupils. Senior staff, however, have a clear understanding from their analysis of data of how well pupils are achieving, individually and in groups. The minutes of the governing body's meetings indicate that members are well informed about the work of the school and are monitoring its progress appropriately.

As at the time of the last monitoring visit, the quality of the school's self-evaluation is mixed. The self-evaluation form is detailed and contains some helpful assessment of the progress made since the school opened in 2005. However, the form contains too much description of what has been done and too little evaluation of the impact of measures taken upon pupils' achievement and the quality of the provision. The self-evaluation form does not identify rigorously enough the remaining areas of weakness to be addressed. Nevertheless, the school has made progress since the last monitoring visit; this is particularly evident in the improvement in the overall quality of teaching and learning and indicates that there is the capacity to improve further.

External support

As at the last monitoring visit, the school works with an appropriate range of external professionals in promoting the pupils' health and welfare. The support of consultants from the Hackney Learning Trust is valued by the staff. There is also a helpful network of relations with partner schools and other organisations to support its development within the taught curriculum and as part of its extended school provision.

Main Judgements

The school's overall progress is satisfactory.

Priorities for further improvement

- Improve further the use of assessment in lesson planning to ensure that the needs of all pupils, including the more able, are met.
- Continue to improve subject leadership so that it is consistently effective.

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