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29 March 2007

Mr Alex Wall  
The Headteacher  
The Fairfield Community Primary School  
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Worcestershire WR4 9HG

Dear Mr Wall

## FRESH START: MONITORING INSPECTION OF THE FAIRFIELD COMMUNITY PRIMARY SCHOOL

### Introduction

Following my visit with Peter Kemble, Additional Inspector, to your school on 21 and 22 March 2007, 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 2004.

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

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and a selection of the pupils' work. Meetings were held with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, other key staff, the vice chair of governors and a representative of the local authority (LA). Informal discussions were held with pupils.

### Context

The school moved into new purpose built accommodation in June 2006. The Nursery is now full and there are a number of children on the waiting list. Since the last monitoring visit, there have been some significant staff changes. An assistant headteacher left in December 2006 to take up a promoted post in another school. This senior post has not been replaced. Three teachers have taken maternity leave and two have returned on a part

time basis. There are two teachers employed on a temporary basis. One of the temporary teachers is a newly qualified teacher (NQT) who is being mentored by the deputy headteacher.

### Achievement and standards

Standards remain exceptionally low. Although the 2006 national assessments show Year 2 pupils did better in reading than the previous year, none of them reached the higher Level 3 and overall attainment fell. However, Year 6 national test results indicate that standards are rising slowly. That said, standards of writing across the school are still an area of great concern. Lesson observations and a scrutiny of pupils' work, as well as the school's own data, indicate the majority of pupils are making inadequate progress in their writing skills.

During the summer term 2006, the academic progress of many pupils was disrupted by the move to the new school. Issues to do with the new building interfered with pupils' learning and so for many pupils their progress was hampered. Consequently, the overall rate of academic progress since September 2006 is uneven and in several classes it is inadequate.

When children start in the Nursery their knowledge and skills are well below those expected for their age. They are making satisfactory progress in the Foundation Stage because activities are carefully planned to meet their learning needs. Children with learning difficulties across the school also make sound progress because of well targeted intervention programmes. The end of year targets for Year 6 pupils have been revised recently to take account of pupil mobility. These targets are ambitious but pupils in Year 6 are working hard and most are on track to reach them.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the monitoring inspection in March 2005:

- raise standards and improve achievement – inadequate.

### Personal development and well-being

Good progress has been made to improve pupils' attitudes to school. Pupils are generally well behaved, courteous and friendly. They play amicably in the playground despite the presence of workmen and equipment on the unfinished school site. Behaviour and attitudes are good and sometimes outstanding. For example, pupils listened attentively in an assembly when they were introduced to some live chicks. They remained calm and sensible despite the excitement of a 'non-uniform' school day. The vast majority take part in lessons with enthusiasm. Pupils enjoy their learning and are happy to

contribute to whole class discussions. Lessons are characterised by good teamwork and positive relationships between adults and pupils. Pupils are inattentive and lose concentration when tasks are too difficult or too easy or when the pace of lessons is slow. Attendance is disappointing and is below the national average. The school's procedures for recording and following up absences are now more rigorous. Attendance is improving very slowly over time.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the monitoring inspection in March 2005:

- improve the attitudes of some of the older pupils – good.

### Quality of provision

Since the last visit, when teaching was reported to be usually good, staffing changes and the move to the new building have had an impact on its quality. During this monitoring visit, teaching was satisfactory overall with some good features. As a result, the rate of pupils' progress is slower than at the time of the last visit. However, despite the difficulties, teachers have successfully maintained good relationships with pupils, have improved the use of the interactive whiteboards, and continued to help pupils develop good attitudes to their learning.

Good progress is made in lessons when teaching is enthusiastic and inspiring. Year 1 pupils wrote some imaginative sentences about Cinderella's Ugly Sisters after the teacher had played the part of one of the sisters. Pupils make good progress when the lesson content is relevant to their own experiences and interests. For example, Year 6 pupils made good progress in a literacy lesson using laptop computers to add movie features to their poems. However, there are too many lessons where progress is slow and planning does not take full account of what pupils need. Teachers' lesson plans for English, mathematics and science are detailed. They contain clear learning objectives, tasks at different levels of difficulty, and ways of assessing pupils' achievements. Nevertheless, the content is sometimes based on what national guidelines suggest is appropriate for pupils of certain ages rather than what is needed for individuals and groups of pupils in the class. This means that pupils lose interest, move off task and make little progress. Examples of this were seen at the start of literacy lessons where pupils sat for too long as the purpose of the lesson was introduced and explained.

Pupils' workbooks show that the marking policy is bringing more consistency to the way pupils are helped to know what they need to do to improve. However, practice varies from class to class. Although there has been some improvement, there are still instances where teachers' written comments,

including those on whiteboards and labels, do not provide pupils with good examples of handwriting, punctuation and spelling. Some progress has been made in modifying the curriculum to meet the needs of pupils more effectively and much work has been done in improving the quality of literacy and numeracy lessons. Nonetheless, there is still work to be done in promoting the basic skills of reading, writing and numeracy by careful selection of appropriate parts of the National Curriculum and by adjusting the timetable to include more suitable approaches to learning.

Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities make similar progress to that of their peers. They often receive good tuition in withdrawal groups. Their individual education plans are well thought out and regularly reviewed to determine progress. Care, guidance and support continue to be strengths of the school. It is a very caring and supportive school, with considerable attention given to pupils' safety and well-being. Pupils report that they feel secure and are happy to go to adults if they have any problems or concerns.

### Leadership and management

The priority identified in the last monitoring visit to improve the accommodation has been successfully realised. The school has settled into the new building and the headteacher has effectively maintained a positive learning climate during the protracted move. However, the move has hindered academic progress. In addition, staffing changes have had a significant impact on the rate of improvement. Two members of the senior leadership team the numeracy and literacy coordinators have left. This has meant that crucial work in these core subjects has slowed and, consequently, had a major impact on the pace of development, particularly in pupils' writing.

Systems for monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching and learning are thorough. As a result, the headteacher has a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of teaching. Areas for development are identified and fed back to the staff. However, there is not enough modelling of exemplary practice or coaching to bring about necessary improvement swiftly enough. Tracking the rate of progress pupils make is undertaken on a regular basis but the data is not easily accessible and there is no analysis of the performance of different groups of pupils.

The detailed and comprehensive school improvement plan is not up to date and lacks precise and measurable milestones. Many areas are identified in the plan and so the school is attempting to tackle a wide range of improvement issues. As a result, despite working very hard, staff lack the clear direction of a systematic, tightly focused set of priorities. Governors are committed and

keen to be involved in the life of the school. The new chair of the curriculum committee and another governor recently visited all classes to find out more about the work of the school in literacy. They prepared a useful report on their observations for the rest of the governing body.

#### External support

The link adviser continues to make frequent visits to the school and has supported it well through the move to the new site. Effective support is provided by literacy and numeracy consultants as well as an advisory teacher. Additional support is needed to help the school develop on a more sharply focused school improvement plan and more analytical school evaluation form.

#### Main Judgements

The school's overall progress is satisfactory.

#### Priorities for further improvement

- Increase leadership capacity to ensure pupils develop the necessary skills to make better progress in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Develop a simple and effective system to track pupils' rate of progress, including different groups, in order to recognise and act on underachievement and set appropriately challenging individual targets.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the chair of governors and the Director of Education and Lifelong Learning for Worcestershire.

Yours sincerely

Linda Rockey  
H M Inspector