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Mrs Shanthi Ravi Varma
Headteacher
Springfield Community Primary School
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Hackney
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Dear Mrs Ravi Varma

FRESH START: MONITORING INSPECTION OF SPRINGFIELD COMMUNITY PRIMARY SCHOOL

Introduction

Following my visit with Jo Curd, Additional Inspector, to your school on 11 July 2007, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the fifth 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

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, the deputy head teacher and other nominated staff, the chair of governors and a representative from the Hackney Learning Trust. Inspectors also spoke with pupils and teaching assistants.

Context

On previous monitoring inspections, the slow progress with the new building programme has been noted. Work is now scheduled to begin during the coming summer holidays, although it is not expected to be completed by the start of the school year 2007/08. As reported previously, this will mean that the school has been open for two years before any new accommodation has been provided. This has been a matter of continuing concern particularly in the Foundation Stage, for which the learning area is a poor one, cramped and unattractive; although the staff do all that they can to improve its appearance.

There have been further staffing changes since the last monitoring visit; a new assistant headteacher has joined the school and one post is presently filled by a supply teacher. The present deputy headteacher will leave the school at the end of the present term; her successor will take up post in September 2007.

Achievement and standards

The national test results in 2006 were the first for the new school. Ofsted's data indicated that the contextual value added for the pupils who took the tests in Key Stage 2 was above the average. However, the cohort size upon which the analysis was based consisted of only 20 pupils so that great caution is needed in interpreting such data. National assessment results for 2007 are available in provisional form for Key Stage 1 but have not yet been received for Key Stage 2. At Key Stage 1 standards were significantly lower in writing than in reading and mathematics. The school anticipates that its statutory targets for Key Stage 2 will be missed but the Year 6 group who took the tests consists of only 13 pupils and there has been a significant degree of pupil mobility since the targets were set. Results in mathematics are expected to be higher than those in English. The staff have worked hard to raise attainment at Key Stage 2 through a range of out-of-hours booster provision.

In the eight part-lessons observed during this monitoring visit, pupils' progress was at least satisfactory in all cases and good in six. Standards are generally below national expectations and low attainment in literacy and oracy remains a barrier to progress for many pupils. However, the pupils are more engaged in their learning than was the case a year ago and their learning skills have improved. They are more independent, more willing to persevere with challenging tasks, collaborate more productively and are more confident in answering and asking questions in whole class oral work. There is a high level of in-class support for pupils with additional needs, but tasks and resources are not always matched to their individual levels of attainment.

Children in the Foundation Stage make good progress although most begin school with attainment below the expectation for their age, particularly in their language development and social skills. The staff ensure that the children's differing needs are met. Those who have English as an additional language achieve well because of appropriate activities are planned to meet their needs. Children with learning difficulties are well supported and make good progress. Staff have high expectations of the more able and provide for them a broad range of open ended activities which enable them to extend their skills, understanding and independence. The school's Foundation Stage assessments, which have been externally moderated, indicate that almost all children achieve nationally expected standards by the time they leave the reception class.

Personal development and well-being

Pupils generally enjoy their work and are confident learners, keen to do well. Year 6 pupils who spoke to HMI said that they would be sorry to leave the school this summer. Behaviour in lessons was good overall. The challenging behaviour of a small

number of pupils is usually managed well, although there have been two exclusions this term. Some behaviour at lunch and play time is noisy and boisterous. All pupils benefit from the positive role models and interaction of staff, especially at playtimes when staff take the time to talk with them and to join in games such as football.

Concentration in lessons is generally good, although for some individuals it wanders when activities are continued for too long. Most pupils want to learn and readily do as they are asked. Many children start the nursery with underdeveloped social skills but through regular routines, consistent expectations, an interesting curriculum and ready accessibility of resources they quickly develop independence and learn to follow routines, respond to teachers' requests, take turns and share with each other.

The staff have worked hard to raise attendance through initiatives such as the weekly 'class cup' for the best attendance and have made some positive impact. However, in a small school irregular attendance or extended holidays by a very small number of pupils have a significant effect on the figures. Attendance is below the national average.

Quality of provision

The school evaluates the quality of teaching and learning as good, with a range from outstanding to satisfactory. Inspectors judge the quality of provision to be good. During the monitoring inspection, eight part-lessons were observed. Teaching was good in six of these, and satisfactory in the other two. There are numerous strengths in the teaching. In general, staff manage pupils' behaviour effectively in lessons, combining an appropriately firm approach with encouragement and positive feedback so that pupils' confidence is developed. Planning is detailed, lessons are well prepared and classrooms are organised to ensure that resources are readily to hand, encouraging pupils to move on with their learning independently. In the best lessons, tasks and resources are matched to the pupils' differing levels of attainment. In most rooms, teachers have worked hard to make the space more attractive, as well as to contribute to learning resources through good use of display. Where practice is best, the teaching is lively and there is well considered use of resources, including the interactive whiteboards. Questioning is effective, with strategies to ensure all pupils are encouraged to contribute and not only the most confident and articulate.

The school has detailed tracking systems to monitor the progress of individual pupils and of groups of pupils. The use of assessment has improved through the introduction of a new system to enable teachers to have an instant visual impression of pupils' levels of understanding of each piece of work. There is some good practice in ongoing assessment during lessons to ensure that all pupils are learning. However there is still inconsistency in the degree to which teachers make use of assessment to plan to meet pupils' individual needs. Too often the same activities and resources are provided for all pupils so that higher attainers move on to other tasks only when they have finished the same work as the rest of the class. Work in some books of lower attaining pupils is unfinished suggesting that some were finding the work difficult. The use of pupil targets in literacy and numeracy continues to develop, with useful information prominently displayed on classroom walls. However, several of the

pupils could not say what their own targets were and a few were unsure whether they had targets or not.

Teaching and learning are good in the Foundation Stage and include a good balance of activities which are led by adults or chosen by children. There are ample opportunities for children to work alone, reflect on what they are doing and practise new skills. There are also times for children to work with others, including adults. Resources are imaginative and attractive. Occasionally, opportunities are missed; in one lesson, for example, children would have benefited from being able to see examples and illustrations in books to help them with the masks they were creating.

The school reports that statutory requirements for the curriculum are met. In addition, the staff have rightly focused in their curricular planning upon meeting the specific needs of their pupils. Attainment in oracy, literacy and numeracy is below or well below expected levels overall and the school has therefore emphasised improvement in these basic skills as a curricular priority. Out-of-hours teaching is provided to raise standards in the national tests. The school also offers a family literacy programme and reports that the initiative has been well received by parents and carers. There is a strong focus placed upon developing the emotional health of the pupils and the school has adopted the Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning initiative from the government Department for Children, Schools and Families for use in its circle time sessions. Pupils have access to a growing number of extracurricular sports, music and art activities.

The curriculum for the Foundation Stage is of good quality, providing for a broad range of imaginative and practical activities. It engages and interests all groups of children and provides well planned opportunities for language development. The outdoor area for the reception base, soon to be replaced, is poor but it is nevertheless used effectively by the staff to ensure the best range of activities in the circumstances.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the monitoring inspection in March 2007:

- Improve further the use of assessment in lesson planning to ensure that the needs of all pupils, including the more able, are met - satisfactory progress

Leadership and management

The headteacher and deputy headteacher work effectively together and have set a clear agenda for school improvement. There is among the staff a common sense of purpose, to raise levels of achievement and to promote the welfare of the pupils. Appropriate priorities for improvement have been identified and the school has moved forward despite the difficulties and frustrations associated with the Fresh Start building programme. Management systems and structures are developing well. School improvement planning identifies appropriate priorities to raise levels of attainment. Governors are active and well-informed. They have sought parental opinions on the work of the school and are determined to act upon the outcomes. The school's self-evaluation has become more focused over time. Records of the monitoring of teaching and learning indicate that weaknesses as well as strengths in

the teaching are being identified. However, the findings of this inspection do not support the school's judgements in the current self-evaluation form that aspects of its work and provision are outstanding.

The quality of subject leadership has improved as co-ordinators have worked with coaches and mentors to develop their understanding of their role and of the contributions made by their subjects to the curriculum as a whole. Literacy and numeracy subject managers are well-informed, through their monitoring of assessment data and other evidence of pupils' progress, and they have a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in their subject areas.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the monitoring inspection in March 2007:

- Continue to improve subject leadership so that it is consistently effective – good progress

External support

The school continues to work with a suitable range of external professionals in providing care, guidance and support for pupils. Consultants from the Hackney Learning Trust have provided subject specific and management support which the staff have found helpful and effective. The school works in partnership with a network of other primary and secondary schools to improve the quality of its professional development programme.

Main Judgements

The school's overall progress is good.

Priorities for further improvement

- Continue to improve the use of assessment in lesson planning to ensure that tasks and resources are consistently well matched to the pupils' individual needs and levels of attainment
- Continue to develop strategies to raise pupils' standards of attainment across the curriculum and particularly in writing
- Further improve the rigour and accuracy of school self-evaluation.

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