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5 December 2008

Ms Fiona Judge
Head of School
Springfield Community Primary School
Castlewood Road
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N16 6DH

Dear Ms Judge

Ofsted monitoring of schools with a notice to improve

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 27 November 2008, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during my visit. Please extend my thanks to the executive principal of the federation and the chair of the Interim Executive Board (IEB).

Significant changes to the school's leadership and management have taken place since the last inspection. The school is in partnership with a local federation and a new leadership model has been in place since September 2008. The school is now led by a Head of School and an Executive Principal, both of whom are new to the school. The local authority (learning trust) successfully applied to the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families to appoint an IEB to replace the governing body and this was established in June 2008. There have been significant changes to the teaching staff. Of the eight class groups in the school, four are being taught by established members of staff. There are two supply teachers and two others with contracts for this academic year, including one teacher on secondment from the federation. In January, three new permanent teachers will join the school, including an assistant headteacher. All classes are now in new or refurbished accommodation and the final phase of the building programme for the fresh start initiative has just begun. Although the number of pupils on roll remains stable, there continue to be high levels of mobility, with 22% joining since the last annual school census. Approximately 80% of pupils do not have English as their first language and 30% are at the very early stages of learning English.

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

As a result of the inspection on 5 and 6 March 2008, the school was asked to:

- raise standards in English, mathematics and science and make sure that all pupils reach their potential
- improve the use of assessments to inform lesson planning and ensure that activities are well matched to meet the differing needs of all pupils
- improve the quality of all teaching by sharing the existing good practice
- improve school improvement planning so that actions are sharply focused on raising attainment
- improve monitoring and evaluation so that weaknesses are urgently addressed and the school is able to identify those strategies which are having the most positive effect.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time the school is making satisfactory progress in addressing the issues for improvement and in raising the pupils' achievement. Progress towards addressing each issue is satisfactory.

There was a period of instability and a decline in the quality of education at the school following the last inspection. Significant changes to staffing led to a deterioration in pupils' behaviour and a slow start in addressing the important areas identified for improvement. However, as a result of good support from the learning trust and the swift appointment of a new Head of School, there was a positive start to the new academic year, with minimal disruption to pupils' learning. The pupils' behaviour quickly settled back to being as good as reported at the last inspection. Most of the improvements to the quality of the provision have happened in a relatively short period of time, since the beginning of the autumn term, and the school is now on track to tackle the job that needs to be done.

Provisional results for the end of Key Stages 1 and 2 in 2008 show that standards remain well below national averages. Mindful of the fact that pupils need to make accelerated progress if the legacy of underachievement is to be addressed, the school is targeting pupils to make more than expected progress over this academic year and is concentrating its efforts on raising attainment in numeracy and literacy. Early indications from assessments this term are that there is some accelerated progress in Years 5 and 6 in mathematics as a result of specific, individual programmes. Similarly, revised approaches to developing pupils' speaking and listening skills are having a positive impact on their standards in reading and writing. Improving standards in mathematics is the priority for the spring term and underachievement in science will be tackled with greater attention in the summer term. Progress towards the early learning goals for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage continues to be good, with children reaching close to national expectations from below average starting points. It is still very early days for raising standards across the school but suitable plans are in place and sufficient priority is being given to tackling the issues.

Improvements to the school's tracking system ensure that sufficient and reliable information is available to teachers to plan effectively for different abilities within the class. Teachers are now clear about their responsibilities to focus the learning more

specifically for each group. A suitable assessment cycle has been established, with all the information needed to track and evaluate pupils' progress from one year to the next. More work now needs to be done to look more closely at the progress of particular groups of pupils, such as those who are at the early stages of learning English and for all pupils from one key stage to the next.

The quality of teaching ranges from unsatisfactory to good, and is supported by regular observation of lessons and scrutiny of pupils' books. Any underperformance is tackled rigorously. Revised planning formats, introduced this term, have led to greater consistency in the use of learning objectives and different activities for different ability groups. Throughout the school the emphasis on talking, listening and using the classroom environment to develop independent learning is evident. The quality of marking remains variable and the use of assessment to inform learning is at an early stage in some classes.

Improvement plans are now firmly rooted in raising attainment, with a clear focus on English, mathematics and science. Responsibilities are clear and the priorities are timely to ensure that actions will have the most effect. The plans are supported by appropriate levels of support and training to strengthen the skills and confidence of staff. The school plans dovetail well with those of the learning trust. It is too early to assess the effectiveness of the plan but the monitoring and evaluation of the actions within the plan are already beginning to make a difference to the school's ability to spot weaknesses and to do something about them. For this reason, the school has been able to accelerate the pace of change this term. For example, the reliability of certain assessment information was questioned, moderated and revised to ensure secure levels of attainment for tracking. The school is very successfully in its use of improvement planning, monitoring and evaluation to strengthen leadership capacity among senior members of staff.

Support to the school from the learning trust is good and their statement of action is suitably fit for purpose. This support includes a firm commitment from a local federation of schools to provide both leadership and teaching support. This has worked very well to ensure a smooth start to the autumn term. The Head of School, the Executive Principal of the federation and the chair of the IEB work together effectively as a team, determined to make the necessary improvements. Regular progress reports to the IEB ensure that members are well informed and this leads to robust monitoring and evaluation of the school's progress, which includes appropriate levels of challenge and support.

I hope that you have found the visit helpful in promoting improvement in your school.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Heather Yaxley".

Heather Yaxley
HM Inspector