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Ms Sarah Bolt  
Headteacher  
Newfield Primary School  
Longstone Avenue  
Willesden  
London  
NW10 3UD

Dear Ms Bolt

Ofsted monitoring of schools with a notice to improve

Thank you for the help which you, your staff and governors gave when I inspected your school on 4 December 2008, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during my visit. I would also like you to thank the pupils from your school council. I thoroughly enjoyed meeting them, and was impressed by their friendliness and good manners.

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 1 and 2 May 2008, the school was asked to:

- improve achievement and standards in English, mathematics and science
- raise all teaching to the level of the best by involving pupils more fully in their own learning
- enhance the skills of governors so that they can monitor effectively and hold the school to account
- build on the good relationships with parents to improve attendance.

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.

The transient nature of a significant proportion of the school's population is a continuing challenge. A high proportion of pupils joining the school have limited ability to communicate effectively in English and many have very low levels of attainment. The school is effective in quickly integrating these pupils and ensuring that they make rapid progress in acquiring basic levels of English. Nonetheless, the

most recent national assessments and tests at the end of Key Stages 1 and 2 showed that attainment in the core subjects remains well below that found in most schools.

Changes to admission procedures recently made by the local authority are resulting in an improvement in the overall attainment of children entering the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) in the Reception. These children are making steady progress. However, adults sometimes miss opportunities to develop children's skills in speaking. Children generally make good use of opportunities provided to develop their skills as writers and to improve their knowledge of letters and the sounds that they make.

Previous weaknesses in the EYFS in developing children's skills as independent learners continue to affect attainment in older classes. For example, in a Year 2 writing lesson, good teaching did not result in good progress because the pupils lack confidence as writers and are too dependent on adults to guide their efforts. In Year 4, the teaching of fractions was sometimes, of necessity, rather directive because pupils lack the skills and confidence to work independently.

The school has, rightly, placed the greatest focus on raising standards of literacy and numeracy because continuing weaknesses in these areas affect pupils' progress in other subjects. In literacy, in particular, the school has implemented a number of successful initiatives, such as the modelling of good language to pupils in the early stages of acquiring English, and has invested heavily in home reading materials. Work to improve science has been given less priority. This is because standards in science, although below average, are consistently better than those in English or mathematics. An effective tool in the work to improve standards is the managers' use of data about pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics. This ensures that extra help is given to those who need it most. The impact of this is evident in the performance of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities. In 2007–8, at the end of Key Stage 1, the attainment of these pupils was consistently better than that of their peers nationally in reading, writing and mathematics. No national Key Stage 2 data are available yet. The school has amassed a large amount of data about its pupils' attainment and now needs to ensure that the key information is extracted from the monitoring files to give staff a clear and accessible overview of progress.

One of the many improvements made has been the introduction of individual targets for pupils. All the pupils interviewed during the course of the inspection were motivated by their targets. In lessons, teachers routinely set out clear success criteria so that pupils know precisely what they have to achieve. However, these are not always used to pitch work at different levels to ensure achievable challenge for pupils of different abilities. The teachers also miss opportunities to link the success criteria to pupils' individual targets and thus accelerate progress.

A further initiative that is beginning to have a positive impact on pupils' achievement and is contributing to improved teaching is the involvement of pupils in assessing their own progress. For example, in the Nursery, children's success in counting accurately was rewarded by a 'thumbs up' from the rest of the class. In Year 6, pupils say that their teacher helps them more effectively now that they assess their own progress by using a 'traffic light' system of adding coloured marks to their work.

The school acknowledges that there is still much to do to achieve its target of all teaching being good or better. The realisation of this target is essential, in order to make inroads into the low standards that are the legacy of underachievement in previous years.

Governance has improved. The local authority has provided useful training for governors, which has helped them to gain a better understanding of their role. They are better informed, for example, through focused visits to the school and presentations about English and mathematics by senior members of staff. New governors have been appointed, and a new chair of governors is ensuring that the pace of change remains high. However, governors acknowledge that there is still some way to go to develop governance that is more proactive and less reliant on the school for the information provided.

Punctuality has improved and attendance rates have risen. This improvement stems from a combination of factors. The school is now far more rigorous in its monitoring of absences, and these are immediately followed up through telephone contact with parents or carers. The education welfare officer visits regularly and provides good support.

The support provided by the local authority is based on a clear statement of action which meets all requirements. It is being used effectively to help the school improve in all the areas identified at the last inspection. The school is working closely with the authority and is fully consulted during the regular meetings at which progress is monitored.

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

Yours sincerely

Mike Thompson  
Additional Inspector