

10 July 2009

Miss Valerie Fitt  
Headteacher  
Houndsfield Primary School  
Ripon Road  
London  
N9 7RE

Dear Miss Fitt

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 1 July 2009, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during my visit. Please pass on my thanks to the pupils who came to tell me about the school and those with whom I chatted during my visits to lessons.

The school became part of a hard federation with Churchfield Primary School in September 2008. The headteacher of Churchfield Primary was appointed executive headteacher and one of the deputy headteachers was appointed as headteacher of Houndsfield Primary. Two new deputy headteachers, four phase leaders and a number of subject leaders were also appointed, giving the school a senior leadership team made up predominantly of newly appointed staff. The school was removed from special measures and given a notice to improve in November 2008.

As a result of the inspection on 11 and 12 November 2008, the school was asked to:

- raise standards of attainment in all year groups by focusing particularly on skills in English, mathematics and science
- develop consistently good teaching practice so that there is a sharper focus on improving pupils' learning and identifying and filling in gaps in their learning in order to accelerate progress.

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

Pupils and staff speak with great enthusiasm about the impact of the extensive changes and improvements made over the last year. The very recently returned, but yet to be validated, results of National Curriculum tests taken by pupils at the end of Year 6 provide strong evidence of rapid improvement. In English the proportion of pupils reaching the expected and the higher level has risen by 10 percentage points. In mathematics and science the proportion of pupils reaching the expected level has



increased by over 30 percentage points and the proportion reaching the higher level by more than 20 percentage points. This is a considerable step forward. The school's own data show progress increasing at a good rate in most, although not all, classes. Senior leaders are acutely aware of the barriers that remain to ensuring progress is consistent in every class, and are taking action to make rapid improvement possible where changes have been slower to take effect. Nevertheless, senior leaders have 'changed the concept of underachievement' so that teachers recognise that all pupils in all ability groups need to be challenged to achieve their potential.

At the end of Year 2, tests and assessments do not show the same degree of improvement, but the school has been very keen to establish an accurate profile of pupils' attainment to ensure subsequent tracking will give a reliable picture of the progress the pupils make.

In the Early Years Foundation Stage the focus on reading, writing and calculation has brought dividends, with good improvements in attainment in these important areas of learning. The children in the Nursery and Reception classes benefit from a wide range of opportunities, both in and outside the classroom, that promote effective learning.

The positive actions of senior leaders have brought greater consistency to the quality of teaching. Very effective recruitment, rigorous monitoring, coaching and training have all contributed to an increasingly strong profile of the quality of teaching. Following lesson observations, senior leaders give teachers a clear overview of the impact of their teaching on the pupils' learning and progress. As a result, they have identified residual weaknesses in the teaching and are taking appropriate steps to secure further improvements. Discussions with pupils and senior and middle leaders all highlight the marked improvement in the quality of teaching as the most important factor in the school's rapid recovery.

Discussion with pupils also highlighted improvements in behaviour and attitudes to school. This can be seen in the improving attendance rate, which for the last half term was broadly average. Pupils behave well in lessons and respond positively to the teachers' increasingly challenging questions. There have been a small number of exclusions but, instead of the pupils being at home, they are taught at the partner school. This gives the pupils the opportunity continue to learn and to adjust their behaviour. In all cases, the school reports considerable improvements in behaviour when the pupils return.

The close and established understanding and working relationship between the headteacher and the executive headteacher is a crucial factor in the good and, in some respects, rapid improvement the school is making. Their clarity of vision and determination is shared by senior and middle leaders. The united drive and ambition of the senior team runs through all that has been achieved so far and all of the improvements that are planned. The local authority has also made a good contribution through the deployment of consultants and advisers.

By common agreement of the pupils, senior and middle leaders, and representatives of the governing body and the local authority, the school is 'being transformed'. The rate of progress has been significantly enhanced by tried and tested procedures from Churchfield being modified and implemented in this school. Consequently, the pupils and staff are beginning to exude the confidence that success brings.

I hope that you have found the visit helpful in promoting improvement in your school. This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Christopher Parker  
Additional Inspector