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Mrs Jeanette Hiatt
Headteacher
Lighthorne Heath Primary School
Stratford Road
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Dear Mrs Hiatt

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 25 February 2010 and for the information which you provided during my visit. Please pass on my thanks to the pupils and convey my gratitude to the Vice Chair of the Governing Body and the local authority (LA) school improvement adviser for generously giving their time to meet with me at short notice.

Following the school's last inspection in May 2009, the assistant headteacher continued as acting headteacher until December. In January 2010, the local authority prompted the appointment of an interim consultant headteacher for the spring and summer terms, four days a week. The governing body has advertised twice for a permanent headteacher; no appointment was made. The LA is currently seeking to broker a hard federation with a local primary school as an alternative permanent solution from September, but no secure plans are in place.

As a result of the inspection on 7 May 2009, the school was asked to:

- accelerate pupils' progress in literacy and numeracy by improving the quality of teaching and guiding pupils more effectively towards recognising how to improve their work
- develop and implement a strategy to promote community cohesion.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time the school is making inadequate progress in addressing the issues for improvement and in raising the pupils' achievement. Ofsted will continue to monitor the school's progress on the issues where improvement has so far been inadequate.

Valuable time has been invested in establishing suitable systems to measure pupils' progress and in sharpening teachers' skills in assessing and planning pupils' work. Data are being used effectively by leaders and managers to assess pupils' achievement. The school accurately evaluates that most pupils are making at least

satisfactory progress in reading following the introduction of systematic teaching of phonics. Progress in mathematics is much more variable and too many pupils are making inadequate progress in writing. This is because although there are satisfactory elements emerging in teaching, the quality remains fragile and variable.

Lessons are suitably structured and pupils respond appropriately to teachers' input and instructions. The pupils know that they have targets to aim for in literacy and numeracy. Marking is regular and indicates how successful pupils have been in achieving the learning objectives. These are all improvements since the last inspection and indicative of the satisfactory elements of teaching seen in all classes. Nonetheless, pupils' achievement has not improved rapidly enough, for a number of reasons. Expectations for what pupils are able to achieve within the time available are too low and this constrains their progress. Teachers are not using assessment information well enough to pitch lessons with sufficient precision to challenge all pupils, especially the most able. High levels of adult intervention and over-direction prevent many pupils from developing their competence as learners. Expectations for pupils to enter into a productive work ethic are not high enough; the pace of learning is slow. Intervention programmes for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities have had mixed success in improving their skills.

The new acting headteacher has already injected rigour into improving the school's work, communicating high expectations and underpinning them with robust monitoring and evaluation activities. Staff are motivated to improve their practice and performance. In addition, the LA has provided good quality support with some success, but as yet no significant impact on improving outcomes for learners. The LA statement of action is fit for purpose and provides a useful tool for senior leaders to identify small steps of success and areas requiring further attention.

The governing body has undertaken a provisional audit of the school's work in promoting community cohesion and as a result a promising link is developing with a school in a contrasting community. This has raised pupils' awareness of different religions, cultures and lifestyles but they are not always able to articulate this convincingly because they have not yet acquired the vocabulary they need to explain diversity. Plans for further development are included in the school's time-limited statement of action for improvement. This is a move in the right direction but the school knows that there is more to do in developing community cohesion through the curriculum.

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

Linda Killman
Her Majesty's Inspector