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Mrs E Tennant
The Executive Headteacher
Lark Hall Primary School (including Lark Hall Centre for Pupils with Autism)
Smedley Street
London
SW4 6PH

Dear Mrs Tennant

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 28 April 2010 and for the information which you provided during my visit. I would be grateful if you would pass on my thanks to those who met with me, including members of staff, the group of pupils and your School Improvement Partner.

Since the last inspection the school has employed four newly qualified teachers and appointed two learning mentors. Seven new governors have also been appointed. One member of the leadership team is on sick leave. Year 1 and Year 2 classes have moved to same building as other year groups. Those attending the centre for pupils with autism have moved out of this building to bespoke provision in the second building on the site. The school has recently achieved the Financial Management Standard in Schools.

As a result of the inspection on 30 June and 1 July 2009, the school was asked to:

- raise achievement and standards in English, mathematics and science by accelerating pupils' progress
- ensure the school uses its assessment procedures to ensure that pupils have challenging targets and know how to improve
- ensure there is consistency in the quality of teaching and learning by matching work more closely to pupils' needs.

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.

Since the previous inspection, published data for end of Key Stage 2 national tests in 2009 confirm that standards declined and remained low when compared with age-related expectations nationally. Attainment rose in English and this was also



reflected in improved standards in reading and writing in Key Stage 1. Current assessment and tracking data indicate that more pupils in each year group are making accelerated progress in English and mathematics. Pupils are making satisfactory progress in science. The pattern across the school is one of improvement despite progress being somewhat variable between year groups and subjects. Standards are rising, for instance in mathematics, as a result of strong leadership, better teaching, and the much improved and more effective use of accurate assessment. Despite these improvements, pupils still have some ground to make up to reach the school's challenging attainment targets by the end of the year.

Regular monitoring and tracking, for instance through pupil progress meetings, enable class teachers and leaders to plan strategies to help pupils maintain accelerated progress. They also identify what additional and more intensive support is needed for pupils who have particular barriers to learning because of their emotional needs or personal circumstances. Learning mentors and the school's social worker provide very good support in this respect. While the school's assessment systems have improved significantly they are not yet as well used in science as in English and mathematics.

Attendance rose markedly last year and it has increased slightly this year. There is, however, some variability between attendance rates among different year groups. Pupils enjoy their learning and the much improved learning and play environment. They spoke highly, for instance, of the new information and communication technology room and better computers. Pupils are responding positively to the higher expectations teachers have of them and to consistently applied daily routines. Pupils behave well in lessons and are more focused in getting on with their learning. They told the inspector that behaviour has improved since the last inspection. A very small number of older pupils struggle with their behaviour. The school employs a systematic combination of support and sanctions to ensure that this is addressed and does not impact significantly on the learning environment.

Observations from a small sample of lessons confirm the school's own evaluation that teachers are improving their practice and that the majority of lessons are consistently good. The school is working hard to improve this further. The impact is evident in the more consistent way teachers use assessment to inform their planning. In better lessons there is a clear focus on learning for all and teachers are using a variety of suitable activities and resources to sustain momentum. As a result, pupils are interested, on task and make good progress. Occasionally one or two pupils are slow to get going, are unclear about expectations and need to be chivvied along. Whilst additional adult support is well deployed in lessons, in a couple of instances it is too passive to be fully effective. Pupils are given good opportunities to work together and they respond well when encouraged to share their learning with others. Regular questioning helps teachers check on pupils' understanding and assess their progress. In one lesson this was particularly effective when pupils were encouraged to take time to reflect before putting their hands up. Pupils know their individual learning targets. Some, however, struggle to explain what they are



learning and find it much easier to describe what they are doing. The consistency and quality of marking have improved greatly and provide pointers for pupils to help them improve. However, there was limited evidence of pupils being encouraged to reflect and act on written comments from teachers.

Improvements are being brought about by a combination of factors. Teachers are keen to improve their practice and are open to support. There is a greater focus on the quality of learning and what makes a good lesson. Monitoring arrangements are thorough and regular, and backed up by internal and external support for those teachers who will benefit from it. Strong, ambitious and collaborative senior leadership and highly effective federation arrangements underpin these and other improvements. The federation schools are increasingly benefiting from the opportunities it brings for sharing skills, expertise and good practice across the schools. The current leadership team has inherited a budget deficit but the recovery plan is on track, while not compromising the resources necessary to sustain the trend of school improvement.

The local authority provides good and valued support, for instance through regular visits by a member of the advisory team who is also the School Improvement Partner. The support is tailored and targeted at the areas where it can have most impact, for example in strengthening governance and improving the quality of teaching and learning. In very practical terms the provision of additional funding has helped the school make the significant improvements to the physical environment. The local authority has amended its statement of action to address some areas of omission in the original version. The revised action plan outlines the wide range of additional support which is available to the school and sets out clear success criteria for all areas, with the exception of raising achievement in science. While the statement of action does not formally spell out the arrangements for keeping parents informed about the actions planned for Lark Hall, the school keeps parents routinely updated about their children's achievement and, through its newsletter, about the more general progress that is being made in the school.

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

John Kennedy
Her Majesty's Inspector

