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Mrs J Ashley
Headteacher
Shephalbury Park Primary School
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Dear Mrs Ashley

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 18 May 2010 and for the information which you provided during my visit. Please thank your Chair of the Governing Body, the staff and pupils who contributed to the inspection.

As a result of the inspection on 22-23 September 2009 the school was asked to accelerate the progress pupils make and so raise standards and especially so in mathematics by:

- refining assessment procedures to provide a detailed picture of pupil achievement
- ensuring that teachers use assessment information to plan work more closely matched to the individual needs of pupils
- encouraging pupils to take more responsibility for their own learning
- improving the consistency in the quality of teaching through sharper monitoring
- strengthening the role of middle managers.

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.

Attainment in mathematics at the end of Key Stage 2 is improving as a result of carefully targeted support and ability group teaching. Analysis of detailed assessment data related to these pupils confirms their rate of progress has increased since the previous inspection, with approximately a third of pupils in Year 6 expected to attain the higher Level 5 in mathematics in the national tests. However, these data also indicates that about a third of the pupils in Year 6 will not attain nationally expected levels in English, mathematics and science. Despite some clear acceleration

of pupils' progress in mathematics in Year 6, overall standards remain below the national average and progress across the school is still too variable. This is in part due to the above average numbers of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities but also to gaps in pupils' knowledge and understanding as a result of both past and current inconsistencies in the quality of teaching and learning.

Lesson observations are regularly undertaken by senior staff with a firm focus on improving pupil outcomes. Inspection evidence confirms that the headteacher is rigorous in her approach to monitoring lessons, providing detailed feedback to teachers on their strengths and where further improvements are needed. As a result, the quality of teaching and learning continues to improve with some good teaching observed at the end of Key Stage 2. However, teaching is still too variable in some other year groups where it ranges from good to inadequate. Key weaknesses seen include slow pace to teaching and too many activities in a lesson that leave pupils confused about the main learning intentions. These inconsistencies in teaching quality continue to limit the progress pupils make across the school.

A wealth of information is gathered about the achievements of each individual pupil. Senior staff have been successful in collating this information in a manageable format to provide opportunities for detailed analysis. For instance, data about pupils across the school are now analysed effectively to identify vulnerable groups of pupils and individuals in need of extra support. This has led to successful interventions and further support in English and mathematics. All teachers are now fully involved in the process of gathering this information and consequently have a better picture of each pupil's skills and knowledge in all subjects. Half-termly meetings with senior staff ensure teachers are held accountable for the progress pupils make. Furthermore, most teachers use this assessment information well to plan work closely matched to the individual needs of pupils.

Several initiatives have been implemented to encourage pupils to take more responsibility for their own learning. These have included an adjustment to the assembly programme to highlight what makes good learning and instil a sense of responsibility. Detailed surveys of pupils' views by school leaders and middle managers confirm that pupils value this development. Inspection evidence further confirms that older pupils play an active part in their own learning through participation in problem-solving activities with a partner in mathematics and by taking a pride in their work. Targets are provided for pupils to work at in both English and mathematics. However, not all pupils are fully familiar with their targets and this limits the potential of teachers using these targets to fully engage pupils in their learning and accelerate progress.

School leaders have established a culture of improvement, where staff with management responsibility, take greater responsibility in taking the school forwards. A strong sense of teamwork is evident amongst the senior leadership team who meet weekly to review progress against a very detailed plan for improvement. This is providing a firm foundation for further progress. Middle managers play an

increasingly greater role in school improvement and self-evaluation because they are now more confident about what is expected of them. Several have presented subject reviews to the senior leadership team and consequently there is now a greater sense of ownership about what needs to be further improved. The school federation governing body provides appropriate levels of support. Comprehensive termly evaluations by the local authority provide regular opportunities for governors to monitor the school's progress in addressing the key issues for improvement. However, the current procedures to involve governors in school improvement and self-evaluation are underdeveloped.

Good levels of support are provided by local authority and other professionals to develop teachers' skills and support school management. Amendments to the local authority's statement of action have been implemented effectively to ensure a clear focus on improving standards within specific but realistic timescales.

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

Philip Mann
Her Majesty's Inspector