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Mr C Tunstall and Mr S Hall
Executive Headteacher and Associate Headteacher
The Federation of Kingswood and Elm Wood Primary Schools
Gipsy Road
London
SE27 9RD

Dear Mr Tunstall and Mr Hall

Ofsted 2009-10 survey inspection programme: raising aspirations
and achievement: the power of partnership

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff and pupils, during my visit on 12 and 13 January 2010 to look at the hard federation at Kingswood and Elm Wood Primary Schools and your recent partnership with Paxton Primary School.

The visit provided valuable information which will contribute to our national evaluation and reporting. Published reports are likely to list the names of the contributing institutions but individual institutions will not be identified in the main text without their consent.

The evidence used to inform the judgements included discussions with senior and middle leaders, a group of pupils, a representative from the local authority and the school improvement partner. I made brief joint visits to all classes in both schools and observed a literacy lesson at Paxton Primary School. I also looked at key documentation for your partnership work.

Features of effective practice

- From the outset you swiftly established a clear, successful vision for the federation; this was firmly rooted in shared high expectations for the two schools involved. Your steely resolve to ensure all staff assumed responsibility for the achievement of every pupil in the federation, coupled with your relentless drive to raise standards, yielded impressive improvement at Elm Wood in a very short space of time. I note the school came out of special measures within a year and was judged to be a good school with many outstanding features in November 2008.
- Key to this success story was the efficiency in which you managed to move excellent teachers from Kingswood to Elm Wood mid-term and put in place the same rigorous systems established at Kingswood for curriculum planning, assessment, monitoring the pupils' progress, teaching and learning. In addition, the excellent programme of professional

development opportunities offered to staff, such as the impressive range of in-house training and the on-site Master's degree programme, was also a significant factor.

- Another impressive feature enabling the swift improvement at Elm Wood was how quickly you transformed the ethos of the school. You skilfully managed to bring parents, staff, governors and pupils on board because they could see an immediate improvement, such as the lively learning environments, the introduction of the same school uniform and improved behaviour and teaching. The Elm Wood pupils spoke eloquently about their new found love of learning and how proud they are of their new school blazer.
- Shared aspirations for high quality, inclusive education in both schools were clearly evident. All classes were vibrant with many imaginative displays which stimulated pupils' learning. Teaching was challenging, the pupils' work was of a high standard and planning was meticulous.
- The quality of leadership and management across the federation is outstanding. Rigorous, imaginative recruitment procedures ensure that you appoint staff of a high calibre. You invest quality time in their professional development and hold them accountable for improved outcomes for pupils. Consequently, they are effective leaders of learning in their own right; this gives the federation a powerful capacity to sustain improvement at a swift pace. The drive and ambition for every pupil to succeed came through strongly in all discussions.
- I note that you have recently entered into a soft federation with Paxton Primary; a school which was given a notice to improve last year. Already, you have hit the ground running and are establishing the same thorough systems and federation ethos at the school.
- The achievements of the federation are highly valued by the local authority. You work closely with senior officers and receive strong support for its successful strategic development.

Area for development

- Further embed the federation's ethos and systems for improvement at Paxton Primary School.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop partnerships in support of school improvement.

As I explained previously, a copy of this letter will be sent to your local authority and will be published on the Ofsted website. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Mary Harlow
Her Majesty's Inspector