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Miss Sarah Shirras
Headteacher
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Dear Miss Shirras

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools: monitoring inspection of Lionwood Junior School

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 4 May 2011, for the time you gave to our phone discussion and for the information which you provided before and during the inspection. Please pass on my thanks to the two governors that met with me and to the two pupils who were very helpful in showing me around the school.

It is now four years since the school was reorganised from a middle school to a junior school and three years since moving into new, purpose-built premises. Since the last inspection, roles and responsibilities of senior leaders have changed and the leadership team now includes a deputy headteacher and two senior leaders.

As a result of the inspection on 18-19 June 2009, the school was asked to address the most important areas for improvement which are set out in the annex to this letter. Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time the school has made good progress in making improvements and good progress in demonstrating a better capacity for sustained improvement.

Better capacity for sustained improvement is exemplified by the way that the leadership team and members of the governing body have successfully steered the school through an extended period of change while remaining firmly focused on raising pupils' attainment. It has taken time for some of their actions to bear fruit and for their aims to be fully realised. Systems and structures in place at the time of the last inspection are now firmly embedded and have been built upon, making a consistently positive difference to pupils' achievements. For example, published results for 2010 show that, for the first time since 2006, pupils in Year 6 reached standards in line with national averages in English and mathematics. This represents good progress in mathematics and in reading, however progress in writing is still too



variable. Disappointingly low attainment in writing for pupils at the end of Year 6 in 2010 led the school to analyse the results thoroughly and to make changes to the way that pupils apply what they know about good quality writing. Early indications are that this has been effective in addressing the issue without losing pupils' enthusiasm and confidence as writers. Similarly, the proportions of pupils making two levels progress in English and mathematics improved in 2009 and again in 2010. The current Year 6 pupils are on track to continue this trend and some pupils in Year 5 have already exceeded their targets. In addition, across the rest of the school, pupils' literacy and numeracy skills have improved. This is because of well targeted additional support, as well as through well founded changes made to teaching, the curriculum and assessment systems. Pupils' achievements are thoroughly tracked and analysed in reading, writing and mathematics but not in science and other subjects. Any underachievement is identified quickly through analysis of data and the termly pupil-progress meetings. Support follows swiftly, either by addressing a particular gap or misconception in pupils' learning, or by providing support to develop confidence and resilience in learning.

The proportion of good teaching has improved since the last inspection and typically a large majority of teaching results in pupils making good or better progress in lessons. This is because the leadership team insists upon high expectations and provides good quality support to teachers. There is a shared expectation for all pupils to make progress in line with national expectations. In addition, opportunities to discuss how well each pupil is doing are helping teachers to refine and improve their practice. The contribution that support staff make to the pupils' learning in class is not always clear. A new marking policy was implemented from January 2011. Where applied, it gives pupils good opportunities to reflect on their work and to act upon teachers' comments. However, the agreed policy is not consistently or routinely applied by a few teachers. This significantly reduces the opportunities for all pupils to know how to improve the quality and presentation of their work.

As a result of the last inspection, members of the governing body and staff were asked to be more precise in their analysis and measurement of school development. There is good improvement in this respect, not least because of the positive impact the new leadership team has had. Aply led by the headteacher, the leadership team share responsibility for raising attainment and holding others to account. They monitor and evaluate pupils' progress well and set appropriately challenging targets. Assessments and evaluations are accurate and reliably based on a range of robust measures. These things are helping to raise attainment. Senior leaders of English and mathematics make a significant contribution to school improvement through their use of data, support to teachers and actions taken to address underachievement. Members of the governing body now provide the leadership team with greater challenge and can do this because they are better informed. They ask searching questions about the impact of school actions with a firm focus on the difference that they make to pupils. This focus on raising attainment pervades the work of the school but they have not lost sight of other aspects of pupils'

development as learners. Accordingly, developing pupils as confident and enthusiastic learners is given equal attention to the knowledge that they acquire.

Although the school welcomes support from the local authority, leaders feel that at times the support was not tailored to their particular needs. This has been addressed and the leadership team brokered the support that they feel appropriate and timely in order to move the school forward.

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

Yours sincerely

Heather Yaxley
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in June 2009

- Embed plans to develop pupils' key skills and raise standards in writing further.
- Increase the consistency of good teaching and marking in school so that it becomes the norm.
- Involve governors and staff fully in a more precise analysis of the impact of school developments and in determining how to measure successes.