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12 May 2005

Mrs J Loomes  
Headteacher  
Jesmond Road Primary School  
Percy Street  
Hartlepool  
TS26 0HR

Dear Mrs Loomes

### **Implementation of Jesmond Road Primary School's Action Plan**

Following my visit to your school on 27 and 28 April 2005, with my colleague, Mr R Weir, Additional Inspector, I write to confirm the findings and to notify you of the outcomes.

As you know, the inspection was part of a policy involving a broader series of visits by HMI and Additional Inspectors to check on the development and improvement of schools which have been designated by their section 10 inspection as having serious weaknesses. You will recall that the focus of the inspection was to assess: the quality of the action plan; the pupils' standards of attainment and their progress; the quality of education provided; the leadership and management of the school; the pupils' attitudes and behaviour; and the progress that has been made in implementing the action plan and removing the causes of the serious weaknesses.

During the visit we inspected 20 lessons or part lessons; attended a registration period and two assemblies; scrutinised a wide range of documentation provided by the school; and held discussions with you and nominated staff on the areas for improvement identified in the section 10 inspection. We also examined a range of pupils' work and spoke informally with other staff and pupils.

On the basis of the evidence gathered during the visit, we made the following observations to you, the deputy headteacher, the chair of governors, the partnership headteacher and the school's link adviser.

Overall standards of attainment in the 2004 national tests throughout the school showed a slight improvement on the previous year's results, especially in mathematics. The value-added measure compared with similar schools based on free school meals and the pupils' prior attainment was average. However the results overall compared to similar schools, remained well below average in reading and writing and below average in mathematics in Year 2. In Year 6 they were well

below average in English, below average in science and average in mathematics. Standards were better in Year 6 than in Year 2; this picture was reflected during the monitoring visit. Standards in the Foundation Stage are below average, but there was some evidence of good progress in the nursery as a result of more challenge and high expectations, especially in writing. There remains some underachievement in Years 1 and 2 that is reflected in the school's predicted targets for the 2005 national tests.

The quality of teaching was very good in one lesson, good in eight, satisfactory in eight and unsatisfactory in three, two of which were in the Key Stage 1 resource base. There were certain features that typified the strongest and the weakest lessons. Consistent strengths included: detailed weekly lesson planning and formative assessment frameworks that identified what groups of pupils were expected to learn; clear and specific learning objectives and shared success criteria; good organisation and imaginative activities that interested the pupils and effective links between subjects, for example, in Year 4 history, the pupils measured out the length of an imaginary Viking longboat in the playground. There was also some stimulating work evident, for example in early imaginative writing and simple drama in Year 1 and the teaching of mathematics in Years 3 and 6.

Less effective aspects of teaching in the unsatisfactory and some other weaker lessons were low expectations and lack of challenge for more able pupils. Most significant was a lack of awareness of National Curriculum programmes of study that led to some omissions in pupils' learning, for example, in history and design and technology. Although there was a consistency in the good quality of planning, there was some variation in the account taken of the pupils' prior learning, so that lessons could build on what they understood. The teachers' explanations, instructions and questioning were often weak in these lessons.

The quality of pupils' learning was variable. Several teachers used a range of teaching techniques effectively to stimulate pupils' interest and enjoyment in their learning. For example, in a Year 1 science lesson, opportunities were provided to engage and help pupils understand the conditions under which seeds would grow. Nevertheless in some other lessons pupils struggled to achieve their tasks when they did not have enough guidance; for example, Year 2 pupils learning how to write a sustained story persevered in the face of considerable adversity to conjure up an island on which a pirate might bury treasure without appropriate stimuli. In the reception classes and Years 1 and 2, there was too little modelling of writing or opportunities for the pupils to write independently. The perceptive involvement of adults, including voluntary parental support, was a strong element in the work of the nursery. The children made good progress and their development was systematically monitored and assessed.

Provision for Year 1 and 2 pupils who have special educational needs in the Resource Base was unsatisfactory. There was a lack of structure and insufficient clarity in what pupils were expected to do when not working directly with an adult. Behaviour management was poor and on one occasion a pupil was asked to

withdraw unsupervised from the classroom. Relationships were, at times, close to being confrontational and unnecessarily aggressive.

Pupils' attitudes and behaviour in lessons were generally good and sometimes very good. Pupils enjoy learning, especially in those lessons where there are planned opportunities to involve them. Older pupils are trusted to take responsibility and carry out a range of useful tasks around the school. Behaviour around the school and in the playground was more variable and there were some instances of minor disruptive behaviour at lunchtimes.

The headteacher is leading and managing the school effectively, despite having to lose seven members of the teaching staff at the end of the summer term because of the inherited budget. She is a forthright and influential leader, well focused on improving teaching and learning and is developing the school's capacity to improve. In the short period since she was appointed, she has put in place a clear organisational structure, including the roles and responsibilities of staff in managing the curriculum and in raising the levels of the pupils' attainment. Particular emphasis is being given to the work of the current school improvement team and the development of a standards team which, under the headteacher's informed leadership, should be able to have firmer control of pupil tracking, target setting and accountability. Consideration has also been given to improving performance management and in-service training opportunities. The professional development of the staff is increasingly well targeted to improving teachers' subject knowledge and their understanding of the sequential stages of the attainment targets in the National Curriculum programmes of study. The work of the school in this context is supported effectively by the local education authority (LEA) and the partnership school in setting realistic expectations.

The governors are making steady progress in fulfilling their statutory duties and helping to shape the vision and future direction of the school. The governing body now has a full complement, including additional governors appointed by the LEA.

There is a clearer committee structure and, in this context, the role of the raising achievement committee is crucial. There is evidence that the governors are playing a more strategic role in the work of the school and this important function is facilitated by the impact of governor training and the links made with subject leaders. The governors improving information base, which results from the headteacher's efficient management, is enabling committee members to take a broader view of the school's work, particularly the analysis of data and the setting of targets. Importantly, the governors are taking greater strategic control of the budget and this has led to recent decisions about staffing levels and resources. The governors are also aware of the need to assert value for money principles in respect of key elements of school government, for example, the budget for supply teachers and the maintenance costs for the building. The governors have a number of key initiatives in mind, for example the more constructive involvement of parents in partnership with the school. The school prospectus now complies fully

with statutory requirements. It is informative, of good quality and includes comparative data in respect of attendance and pupils' attainments.

The good action plan is in the early stages of implementation with several key actions due to take place next term. The headteacher has not been deterred from redirecting actions that have not achieved the success expected in order to bring about the required improvements. The LEA support for the school is good. The appointment of a partner headteacher of a very successful school is invaluable. The governing body has been strengthened by the appointment of five additional LEA governors. The LEA's statement of action provides a thorough breakdown of the steps needed to remove the causes of serious weaknesses together with comprehensive success criteria against which to judge progress.

## **Action taken to address the areas for improvement**

### **1: Improve the quality of teaching and learning so that pupils learn more.**

Progress is limited on this area for improvement. The slight delay in the implementation of the action plan and staffing issues unrelated to the outcomes of the inspection has resulted in additional responsibilities for the headteacher. There is currently insufficient good teaching to raise achievement, particularly in some of the classes of younger pupils and in the resource base.

### **2: Carry out and act upon risk assessments**

Actions to complete health and safety checks, with the support of the LEA, have taken place and are satisfactory. A Health and Safety Officer has been appointed and there are trained first aiders on the staff. Risk assessments are carried out as required. The school has been well supported by their partnership school. However, decisions about the longer term issues relating to the building, for example, the inadequate outdoor area for the nursery and the unsatisfactory dining hall arrangements are contingent on the successful outcome of a bid to have a new school. Consequently, governors are mindful of the school's precarious budget situation and do not wish to spend unnecessarily by making temporary improvements. Progress on this area for improvement is therefore limited.

### **3. Improve the role of the governing body and senior managers in checking and evaluating the work of the school, making the raising of achievement the central focus to their work.**

The role of the governing body and senior managers of the school has been evaluated above. Reasonable progress has been made on this area for improvement.

#### **4. Ensure that reports to parents meet legal requirements.**

This area for improvement is fully complete. All statutory requirements are included in reports to parents.

Limited progress has been made in implementing the action plan and removing the causes of the school's serious weaknesses. This visit has raised some concerns about the standard of education provided and the school's performance will be monitored.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the chair of governors and the Director of Education for Hartlepool.

Yours sincerely

**ROSEMARY RODGER**  
**Additional Inspector**

cc: chair of governors  
LEA