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20 December 2006

Mrs Sandra Beckley
The Headteacher
Northend Primary School
Peareswood Road
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Dear Mrs Beckley

OFSTED MONITORING OF SCHOOLS WITH NOTICE TO IMPROVE

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 8 December 2006, for the time you gave to our telephone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during my visit. Please pass my thanks to the staff and the local authority representative who met with me.

As a result of the inspection on 25 April 2006, the school was asked to: raise standards, improve the consistency of teaching and learning, improve the use of assessment information to match work better to pupils' needs, identify underachievement and target support more effectively and develop the role of subject leaders in monitoring and evaluating teaching and learning.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time the school is making satisfactory progress in addressing the areas for improvement.

The 2006 national test results at Year 6 were well below average and did not improve significantly on those of the previous year. English results were similar overall although there was an increase of 14 percentage points in the proportion gaining the highest levels available. Mathematics results rose but were still too low. Results in science, however, declined. Standards in Year 2 were also well below average and below those of 2005. Writing skills were particularly weak. Nevertheless, the school's careful analysis of pupils' progress shows that those pupils who completed Years 3 to 6 in the school, around two thirds of Year 6, made at least satisfactory progress. Information on the progress of the current Year 6 indicates that around half are on track to meet their targets. Carefully focused intervention strategies to support pupils cause the school to predict that around 60 per cent of pupils are likely

to meet the nationally expected levels for their age group. There is a legacy of underachievement that hinders rapid progress in raising standards. Limited progress has been made in this area.

Whole school assessment systems have been developed since the inspection. The school now has clear procedures to identify pupils' attainment and track their progress. Underachievement is clearly recognised through regular analysis of work and tests. Subject co-ordinators have half-termly assessment routines to inform the whole-school tracking. However, assessment in lessons is not yet consistently rigorous enough, with day-to-day identification and recording of progress left too much to individual teachers. Good progress has been made in this area.

The quality of teaching and learning has improved since the inspection with a higher proportion of satisfactory teaching now in evidence. Planning is detailed, introductions to lessons are clear and learning objectives are shared with pupils. Tasks are explained well. However, activities to encourage independent learning and group work do not always match pupils' learning needs well enough. Expectations of what able pupils can achieve are too low in some lessons. Marking is more regular and often encouraging but does not yet lead children to improve their work consistently. Satisfactory progress has been made in this area.

Subject leaders, some new to the school, have a clear understanding of their responsibilities. Good teamwork is supporting their rapid development, as is carefully targeted training. Middle leaders are conducting lessons observations and some are beginning to model good practice in the classroom. Areas of weakness in English, mathematics and science have been carefully identified and targeted throughout the school. There has been good progress.

The school has received strong support from the local authority, particularly in training for staff and support from consultants. The link adviser recognises the need to continue to develop staff at all levels. The senior team has been much strengthened by the appointment of the new deputy headteacher who has led the school's fast progress on its assessment practice.

I hope that you have found the visit helpful in promoting improvement in your school.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, to the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's services for Bexley.

Yours sincerely

Sheila Nolan
Additional Inspector