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12 October 2010

Mr M Clutsom  
The Headteacher  
Upton Cross Primary School  
Upton Cross  
Liskeard  
Cornwall  
PL14 5AX

Dear Mr Clutsom

### **Notice to improve: monitoring inspection of Upton Cross Primary School**

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 5 October 2010 and for the information which you provided before and during the inspection. Please pass on my thanks to the members of staff and pupils who met with me as well as to the Chair of the Governing Body, the vice-chair and the Senior Manager School Improvement. I am also grateful to the School Improvement Partner for the opportunity to speak to him on the telephone.

There have been some significant changes in the leadership of the school. Your executive headship of this school and another ceased following the inspection and you returned to lead Upton Cross full-time once more. Staffing difficulties arose as a result of the illness of one teacher who subsequently left the school at the end of the summer term. A new member of staff has been in place from September. Another teacher has been ill for much of the period since May 2010 and the class has since been taught by the same supply teacher.

As a result of the inspection on 3–4 February 2010, 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 is making satisfactory progress in addressing the issues for improvement and in raising the pupils' achievement.

When you returned to the school full-time, you wisely prioritised the achievement of Year 6 pupils in the class you shared with a colleague. As a result of the illness of this teacher, you spent much of your time teaching this class in order to improve progress. This bore fruit in better progress by these pupils than by Year 6 in 2009 and unvalidated data indicate broadly average attainment in English, although below

this in mathematics. Standards attained by the end of Year 2 in 2010 were higher than the previous year in reading, writing and mathematics and were broadly average overall.

The absence through illness of permanent staff has constrained action to improve teaching and there have been few opportunities for teachers to observe each other or visit other schools to improve their practice. With greater stability in staffing since September, there are plans for such activities. Other approaches, for example using staff meetings to address the assessment of pupils' work and the support of local authority consultants and advisers, have had a positive impact on the quality of teaching. In one lesson observed, planning work carefully to meet the needs of the wide range of pupils in the mixed-age class was a strong feature, although in another lesson what was expected of the higher-attaining pupils was not made explicit enough. A new school policy on the marking of work has been introduced but there remains some variation in its application. The areas identified for pupils to improve also vary in quality. Some relate to low-level adjustments while others set out more important aspects for pupils to work on.

New software has been introduced this term to improve the tracking of pupils' progress. Data entered onto the system are increasingly secure, pupils' progress is checked half-termly and any underachievement is identified more rapidly and appropriate action is taken. For example, the school's systems identified weaker progress than expected last year by some pupils now in Year 6 and 1:1 tuition is planned shortly. Teachers' planning shows that assessment information is being used more to plan activities that match pupils' needs more effectively, although this is not yet fully consistent across the school. Targets have been introduced for pupils in writing and mathematics and all pupils have these pasted in the front of their books. Some give helpful guidance on small, manageable steps to support pupils in making progress but this is not consistent. Some targets use language that is not accessible to pupils and do not provide enough help, for example for more able pupils in how to attain higher levels. Pupils interviewed recognised the value of the new system but indicated they would find more explicit reference to targets in lessons helpful. Enrichment activities, for example a visit to the Eden Project last summer and a recent visit to a baby clinic, are now more carefully planned to contribute more fully to the development of pupils' basic skills.

An audit of provision to promote community cohesion is currently under way and guidance has been sought from the local authority on how to help pupils understand cultural diversity in Britain. A link has been established with a school in a multi-cultural city setting and pupils from this school have already visited Upton Cross.

The school's progress since the inspection has been slower than desired due to the extent of the staffing difficulties last year and the need for you to devote extra time to teaching Year 6 pupils. There is a realistic view of what the school needs to do, guided by a series of plans which could helpfully be rationalised into a more useful working document. Monitoring activities are planned in some detail over the coming

terms and the governing body has been vigorous in checking progress. Arrangements for observing lessons have improved, although the focus on pupils' learning and progress in the classroom is not yet sharp enough.

The local authority's statement of action met requirements and good support has been provided. The School Improvement Partner and local authority advisers have provided a rigorous assessment of strengths and areas for improvement and consultants have provided much support.

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

Grahame Sherfield  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Annex**

### **The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in February 2010**

- Improve pupils' learning and progress by:
  - improving the quality of teaching, including marking, to match the best practice in the school
  - making better use of assessment information to plan lessons and set appropriate learning outcomes for all pupils
  - setting more challenging targets to enable the more able pupils to attain higher levels
  - rigorous tracking of pupils' progress by senior leaders to identify underachievement
  - ensuring that enrichment activities have clear learning objectives to consolidate and apply key skills.
  
- Improve the promotion of community cohesion by extending pupils' knowledge and understanding of the diverse nature of British society.