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17 February 2011

Miss J Burbridge  
The Acting Headteacher  
Halstead Community Primary School  
Otford Road  
Halstead  
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Kent  
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Dear Miss Burbridge

### **Notice to improve: monitoring inspection of Halstead Community Primary School**

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 16 February 2011 and for the information which you provided during the inspection. Please also pass on my thanks to your local authority representative, your School Improvement Partner, consultant headteacher and new executive headteacher. It was also most helpful to be able to meet with the chair of governors and a great pleasure meeting the pupils.

Three days before this visit the former executive headteacher became unexpectedly unable to be responsible for the school. The local authority took immediate action to make a senior teacher acting headteacher, with the support of a consultant headteacher. A new executive headteacher, from Knockholt School, will be taking overall responsibility following the half-term break.

As a result of the inspection on 28 September 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.

There is a strong sense of teamwork in this happy school and teachers are keen to develop their skills. In 2010, there was a significant improvement in attainment and progress for pupils in Years 2 and 6. This improvement partly reflected the fact that they were a more able group of pupils but also this demonstrated improving teaching and learning. The current Year 6, are an exceptionally small size year

group of six pupils and this may well impact immensely on the overall picture of attainment, especially as pupils' capabilities are extremely wide ranging. Pupils' progress is improving securely but attainment is unlikely to be as high in 2011 as it was in 2010.

As a result of the gradually-improving teaching and the introduction of more effective and accurate assessment procedures, pupils' progress is beginning to accelerate, but there is still a need for more good teaching to aid this. Pupils' progress is being carefully tracked now and information from this is being used to plan the next steps of pupils' learning. Decisive action has led to some important changes to class organisation in Years 5 and 6. An extra teacher has recently been employed to support in English and mathematics lessons. This arrangement is more successful at meeting pupils' specific needs and abilities and pupils greatly value this change. In discussions they said such things as, 'We are now doing more advanced stuff,' and, 'It's better now that there are fewer in the class because we get a chance to answer more questions.' However, these discussions also highlighted that there is great inconsistency in how well pupils know their targets for improvement which restricts their progress.

Pupils' attainment and progress are currently better in mathematics than in English. In English, this is pulled down by not having enough children on track to exceed the average level of skill. The school has been focusing well on improving handwriting, spelling and presentation. The sample of work seen shows that pupils are not doing enough extended pieces of writing or revisiting their work from day to day to edit and improve individual pieces of work. This is a factor in why few more-able pupils move on quickly to higher level skills. In mathematics, pupils make satisfactory progress overall, but opportunities for them to explain how they solve problems and use practical resources to support mathematical learning are uneven. The pace of lessons is quickening, but a few lessons are over directed by the teacher and lack additional challenges for pupils which slows the overall pace of learning.

Focused support from the local authority has been helpful in improving teaching, the curriculum, lesson planning and teachers' subject expertise. A few lessons remain inadequate, although the proportion has dropped considerably and there is more satisfactory and good teaching. The quality of monitoring, by senior staff, remains an area for improvement, especially ensuring that teachers are given very precise feedback about how they can improve. Teachers have become far more accurate at evaluating the levels at which pupils are working.

There has been good improvement in pupils' behaviour. The behaviour policy has been reviewed and all classes are following a consistent approach. Pupils are totally clear about the sanctions and rewards. For example, they love the way that they are invited to take part in the weekly 'Children's University' activity afternoons if they have behaved well and tried hard with their work. Pupils say that the school has improved; this is helping them to be motivated and enjoy their work more.

Governors are better informed because they have been well supported by the local authority and have been keen to develop their skills. As a result, they are more evaluative and knowledgeable about the strengths and weaknesses in the school. Statutory requirements are now more fully met and regularly monitored. Site security and basic level safeguarding and child protection training for all staff and governors have improved well. However, the school only has one member of staff who is the designated child protection person. When this member of staff is not in school there is not enough back-up cover.

The local authority's statement of action is fit for purpose and regularly reviewed. The School Improvement Partner is aiding the school's development effectively. This is especially evident in the way that lessons are being modelled and in the way that the school is being helped to monitor the quality of teaching and learning. This has led to an improvement in the quality of teaching. A focus on many other aspects, such as assessment procedures, lesson planning and improving teachers' subject knowledge, also reflects the good support that has been provided.

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

Wendy Simmons  
**Additional Inspector**

## **Annex**

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

- Ensure all safeguarding requirements are in place by the end of October 2010, including appropriate training for all staff.
- Raise attainment and increase pupils' progress, particularly for more able pupils by:
  - using assessment information effectively to plan lessons that meet the needs of all pupils
  - increasing teachers' subject knowledge in English, mathematics and science
  - training staff in a range of teaching styles to improve the pace of learning
  - ensuring that pupils' performance targets are challenging and realistic
  - improving presentation, spelling and handwriting skills
  - developing a consistent approach to managing behaviour.
- Improve the knowledge and skills of the governing body so governors know that all statutory requirements are fully in place and they are regularly monitored.
- Improve assessment practice by:
  - establishing a monitoring and evaluation programme to check that teachers are consistently using performance information when lessons are being planned
  - implementing a whole-school system to track pupils' progress that is used consistently by teachers when lessons are being planned so that the needs of all pupils are being met.