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Mrs V Parsey
Acting Headteacher
Brockwood Primary School
Shenley Road
Woodhall Farm Estate
Hemel Hempstead
HP2 7QH

Dear Mrs Parsey

Notice to improve: monitoring inspection of Brockwood Primary School

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 1 February 2011 and for the information which you provided during the inspection. Please also pass on my thanks to the local authority for meeting with me.

Three teachers have left since the last inspection and four new teachers have joined the school, including the senior teacher. The senior teacher at the time of the last inspection is now the deputy headteacher. The deputy headteacher at the last inspection is now the substantive headteacher and is currently on maternity leave. The acting headteacher, who is also the substantive headteacher at a local successful primary school, was the acting headteacher the time of the last inspection. Although this arrangement ended in September 2010, she has returned to this post to ensure continuity during the new headteacher's absence.

As a result of the inspection on 22 June 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 good progress in addressing the issues for improvement and in raising the pupils' achievement.

The legacy of underachievement within the school is so significant that it is likely that pupils' attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 will remain low for some time yet. However, significant improvements in the quality of teaching and the curriculum are leading to improvements in pupils' progress. This is most clearly seen in Key Stage 1 and lower Key Stage 2, where pupils have less ground to catch up. Individual tuition and additional support is being used to support pupils with significant gaps in their knowledge and early indicators suggest that this is having a positive impact on pupils' achievement. Teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve have been

raised significantly. Improved assessment and tracking systems are better informing teachers of the levels individual pupils are working at. Consequently, teachers are planning lessons that provide more challenge to pupils. Improved opportunities to solve problems are developing well and these are encouraging pupils to think for themselves. Increasingly, lessons are purposeful and brisk, including those in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Pupils are beginning to respond positively to their teachers' high expectations. Their work ethic is improving, although there is still some way to go in developing pupils' ability to maintain their motivation when working independently on challenging work.

Opportunities to improve pupils' speaking and listening skills are developing. In the best lessons, pupils regularly contribute ideas, make suggestions and expand on their points of view when challenged. Because of this, pupils are better able to articulate their ideas and this is having a positive impact on the content of their writing. However, additional adults in classrooms are not always well used to help pupils develop their own ideas or explore concepts. Too often, these adults focus on encouraging completion of tasks without enabling pupils to fully understand and talk about the concepts being taught.

Attendance remains a significant issue for this school. The school is working hard to encourage and support parents and pupils. The school goes beyond what might be expected to try to improve the attendance of some by, for example, picking pupils up from home when they don't arrive at school. Good attendance is rewarded in school and parents are thanked for their efforts with, for example, flowers at attendance assemblies. Absence rates have fallen but still remain too high. Despite the support and encouragement given by the school and local authority, too many pupils still miss too much school and this is having a detrimental impact on their learning. More still needs to be done to impress on these pupils and their parents the importance of regular attendance, parents' legal responsibilities and the likely consequences of poor attendance on their children's life chances.

The local authority created a suitable statement of action, as required when a school is given notice to improve. They have provided effective support to the school in three key areas. First, they have been influential in stabilising leadership within the school. This work started before the school was given a notice to improve. Second, they have provided additional support in developing data handling capability within the school. This robust system allows senior leaders to identify clearly where their efforts are being successful and where strategies need to be adapted. Third, they are providing good quality expertise and guidance for teachers and middle leaders to develop teaching and the curriculum effectively.

The local authority has provided support in monitoring and promoting positive attendance in school. However, more needs to be done to reduce significantly the amount of time lost by pupils, particularly for those who are persistently absent.

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

Michael Sheridan
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in June 2010

- Ensure that the large majority of teaching is good or better by:
 - matching provision closely to the individual needs of pupils
 - ensuring introductions are brisk and actively involve pupils in their learning
 - ensuring that activities in the Early Years Foundation Stage are purposeful and challenging.

- Improve the curriculum to promote active learning by:
 - increasing opportunities for pupils to develop independence in learning through applying basic skills in problem solving and investigation
 - developing the use of speaking and listening activities in different subjects, particularly to help with writing.

- Improve attendance through:
 - more rigorous analysis of attendance data to target actions more specifically
 - working even more closely with families whose children do not attend on a regular enough basis