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Mr T Bradbury
Headteacher
Brady Primary School
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Dear Mr Bradbury

Implementation of Brady Primary School's Action Plan

Following my visit to your school on 22 and 23 June 2005, 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 I inspected eight lessons or part lessons; attended two registration periods, scrutinised a wide range of documentation provided by the school; and held discussions with you, the chair and vice-chair of governors, representatives of the LEA and nominated staff on the areas for improvement identified in the section 10 inspection. I 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, I made the following observations to you, the chair of governors and representatives of the LEA.

The test results at the end of Key Stage 1 have varied considerably over the years but have been below the national average for the past two years, particularly in writing, where standards were well below the national average and the results of similar schools. At the end of Key Stage 2, results have usually been stronger, and often well above the national average. However, they fell from 2002, and in 2004 were well above average in mathematics but similar to the national average in science and below in English. The trend of improvement was below the national

trend at both key stages. The results of the most recent Year 2 tests have risen in reading and writing, although they fell significantly in mathematics. The predictions for the end of Key Stage 2 tests this year reflect a further fall in results, especially in mathematics and science, although results may have been maintained in English. The gap between the boys and girls in English has been considerably wider than the national picture at both key stages.

Standards in speaking and listening are satisfactory overall, but are better in speaking than in listening in some classes; while most pupils put their own point of view forward reasonably articulately and often at length, and take the views of others into account, some find it more difficult to take turns and to listen to others. The pupils' attainment in reading is similar to the national average; almost all read with at least some fluency and understanding. Attainment in writing, however, is still below the expected level in almost all classes and progress overall has been no more than satisfactory. While most pupils were able to put their ideas together in a reasonable structure, weaknesses in spelling and punctuation were hampering the progress of many. Most appear not to transfer the range of vocabulary that they use in speech to their writing, so that much was mundane. Some pupils do not always copy words correctly from text or the board. In addition, the work of most was marred by lack of care in presentation.

Some teachers' own writing does not provide a satisfactory model for the pupils and misspellings of simple words have not always been drawn to the pupils' attention. There was limited evidence of the pupils writing at length in many classes, or developing the richness of vocabulary and complexity of structure to enable them to reach the higher levels. Consequently, there is still a considerable legacy of underachievement throughout the school. The school has implemented a range of measures to address the issues and has recognised that standards in speaking and listening must rise if they are to improve in writing. More attention has been paid to methods of questioning and opportunities for the pupils to speak. A new phonic scheme has been introduced at Key Stage 1, which is already demonstrating an impact, and the approach to teaching reading has developed. The guided reading sessions observed were satisfactory methods for enhancing reading skills, but take up a considerable amount of time during the week. A range of suitable strategies are being employed to improve writing, with a particular and much needed focus on the work of the boys.

Standards in mathematics are lower than the 2004 national average in Years 2 and 6. Many pupils in Year 2 calculate using the four rules rapidly and accurately, while some still use their fingers to work out simple addition. In Year 6, most pupils are working at the expected standards but few have reached the higher level. The pupils' ability to apply their knowledge to mathematical problems is improving because there has been more focus on this area. However, much of the work that has been set for the more able has been identical to that of the pupils of average ability and therefore they have not always been challenged well enough.

Of the eight lessons observed, the teaching was good in two, satisfactory in five but unsatisfactory in one. Class management was mainly sound and there was a calm working atmosphere in most classrooms. When the teaching was more successful, the tasks built securely on the pupils' knowledge and understanding, at the appropriate level for each ability group. The pace was brisk, and high expectations were demonstrated by challenging tasks. The pupils were prepared well for their work, with clear explanations. The teaching was lively, energetic and enthusiastic, with the teachers' good subject knowledge inspiring the pupils to be totally involved. Activities were interesting and were set at suitably challenging levels for the range of attainment in the class.

Throughout the school, the planning was adequate, showing what the pupils were to learn from the activity. Learning objectives were shared with the pupils so that they understood what they were to learn. Teachers were beginning to use differentiated objectives but this practice was inconsistent and some were using these far more effectively in their lessons than others. Some teachers used questioning well, to probe understanding and to promote thinking and the development of language. However, many teachers tended to ask only those pupils who volunteered to answer rather than directing their questioning to involve all the pupils. There was little evidence of differentiated or directed questioning. When the teaching was unsatisfactory it was because there was too little structure to the lesson to enable the pupils to build on and develop their previous learning.

Teaching assistants were mainly deployed well during activities and gave good support to the groups and individuals with whom they worked. However, their time was not always used effectively during the whole-class teaching and plenary sessions, when they mostly sat under-occupied. On most occasions, the pupils maintained concentration and worked together co-operatively, although there were occasions when they spent too long listening to the teacher or sitting on the carpet and therefore became restless.

Assessment is developing satisfactorily; the LEA has provided considerable support to the school in developing its assessment systems and the school now has a sound range of data to support the teachers in planning their lessons. Staff are using these assessments, although there is still some way to go in using assessment consistently to inform teaching, or to demonstrate the progress being made over time. While the teachers assess the pupils' work regularly throughout the year, and their accuracy is improving, there is less evidence of ongoing assessment on which to base the planning of individual lessons. The school has developed its methods for setting targets for the pupils and this is beginning to focus their understanding of how they need to improve their own work. However, the targets were only referred to in one lesson and the pupils in many classes were not sufficiently aware of theirs. Marking remains unsatisfactory; it occasionally showed pupils how well they had done in achieving the objectives of the lesson and how they could improve their work, but this was inconsistent and rarely referred to the pupils' own targets. Some work, particularly in the foundation subjects, remained unmarked.

The school day has been reorganised so that teaching time is more than the recommended minimum. However, considerable extra time is allocated to English and mathematics, with additional time also for information and communication technology, so that there is an imbalance in timetables.

The pupils' behaviour was satisfactory and often good around the school and in lessons; they were mainly attentive and did what they were asked. When the teaching was vibrant, the pupils were totally involved and concentrated well, trying their best throughout. Pupils' attitudes to learning were mainly satisfactory and in the more successful lessons they were good. They usually worked together well, paid careful attention and were eager to respond. However, there was some fuss, inattention and shouting out in a few lessons. There have been two, temporary exclusions this year.

Leadership and management are satisfactory overall and have developed adequately since the time of the inspection. The headteacher has a reasonable understanding of the most urgent issues and the way in which they can be tackled. However, while his management remains competent, there is still a lack of dynamism in the drive for improvement. The newly-formed strategic teaching team are enthusiastic and committed, and have developed their role well since the inspection. They are well aware of the most pressing issues and are focused on ensuring that the rate of progress is maintained. They have been supported well by the LEA to take an active part in planning for improvement. Key co-ordinators have a developing understanding of standards throughout the school and their role in raising standards. The governors have taken on a greater responsibility for challenging the school and holding it to account.

The action plan is a satisfactory basis overall for the school to eliminate its serious weaknesses, although there are some areas for improvement. The actions shown are appropriate, although there is a little too much extraneous detail and some actions are not sufficiently specific. The methods for monitoring the progress being made are helpful, although there are not always dates for these to be carried out. In addition, there is considerable reliance on the LEA to provide this service. There are suitable methods for evaluation, with adequate and sometimes measurable success criteria, but not all have a target date for completion. Self-evaluation is developing but there is still some way to go in ensuring that the school's own view of itself is a realistic one. Some monitoring of teaching has been carried out and while it provided an analysis of the strengths and areas for improvement in teaching, it did not evaluate the quality of teaching and learning or focus sufficiently on standards and whether they were high enough. The school's self-evaluation of progress since the inspection was an adequate assessment of the actions that had taken place and the broad impact they had had. It demonstrated that the plan was on track and that monitoring and evaluation had taken place in order to judge the effect.

The LEA has prepared a sound plan to support the school and develop its understanding of the issues. It shows that guidance has already been given, as

well as in the development of the action plan. Plans for further support are appropriate, as are the procedures for monitoring the progress being made and evaluating the success of the LEA's own actions. Suitable responsibilities are allocated, but the success criteria are the same as those of the school, so that it may not be evident that the progress is the result of the actions of the school or those of the LEA. The good support provided has been thorough and clearly focused on the most urgent areas.

Action taken to address the areas for improvement

1: Raise standards in English, particularly in writing;

The school, in partnership with the LEA, has put a considerable amount of work into improving the teaching of English and given a substantial part of teaching time to the subject. However, questions remain about this amount of time given, contrasted with the amount of progress the pupils are making. Reasonable progress has been made in implementing strategies but there is, as yet, limited evidence of the impact of these.

2: Develop a clearer strategic vision for whole school improvement through better self-evaluation and ensure that planned improvements are carried out with determination and energy;

This issue has been evaluated above; progress in addressing it has been reasonable, particularly through the work of the strategic teaching team.

3: Improve the provision for the children in the Foundation Stage, including the assessment arrangements;

Progress in addressing this issue has been hampered by staff absence, although it has evidently been more rapid recently. The environment has been improved considerably and consequently the pupils are provided with an appropriate range of activities. However, the new teacher is aware that there is still a way to go in ensuring that the balance between planned and independent activities reinforces and builds on what the pupils have already learned, and that play is matched more closely to what they need to develop. There are suitable plans for developing the curriculum and the planning, both of which are not yet adequate. Progress in addressing this issue has been limited overall but there is sound potential for further improvement.

4: Improve attendance with more stringent procedures.

The school has put in place satisfactory procedures to monitor attendance and encourage the pupils to attend regularly. Governors have been particularly involved in this process and take their responsibilities seriously. The actions taken have raised awareness among parents of the importance of good attendance and punctuality. Rates of attendance vary considerably from month to month, and

overall are no higher than they were in 2003-04. The school has, rightly, raised the target level for the future. Punctuality remains an issue requiring more stringent action. Progress overall has been reasonable in putting the procedures in place but the impact has so far been limited.

Reasonable progress has been made in implementing the action plan and removing the causes of the school's serious weaknesses.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the chair of governors and the Executive Director of Education and Lifelong Learning of Havering. This letter will also be posted on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

MRS P C COX
Additional Inspector

cc: chair of governors
LEA