

26 June 2007

Mrs Kim Bennett  
Headteacher  
Diamond Hall Junior School  
Well Street  
Sunderland  
Tyne and Wear  
SR4 6JF

Dear Mrs Bennett

#### Ofsted Monitoring of Schools with Notice to Improve

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when Brian Blake HMI and I inspected your school on 25 June 2007, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during my visit. Would you please also pass on my thanks to Mrs Wilkinson, a governor, and the pupils that I spoke to during the day.

This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website. Please inform the Regional Inspection Service Provider of any factual inaccuracies within 24 hours of the receipt of this letter.

As a result of the inspection in November 2006, the school was asked to:

- increase pupils' achievement and raise standards, particularly in mathematics;
- improve the quality of teaching and maintain a good rate of progress as pupils move through the school;
- improve the quality of leadership and management particularly those with subject responsibilities.

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' achievements.

The headteacher, together with the recently appointed deputy headteacher, has shown great resolve in addressing the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection. The quality of self-evaluation is good and a well constructed school improvement plan is proving to be an effective tool in taking the school forward. Two significant factors have helped to bring about improvement in a relatively short time: the determination of the headteacher to challenge inadequate teaching; and the effective management of staff that has enabled a sense of

teamwork to emerge, characterised by clear common goals. Staff and governors recognise that the school is improving and are keen to sustain this momentum. The school has been well supported and monitored by the local authority. Regular reviews of progress are helping the school to improve the quality of provision.

### Achievement and standards

Since January, almost all pupils have shown improvement across the three core subjects, some as much as three National Curriculum sub-levels. As a result, pupils are making at least satisfactory overall progress, and their standards are improving. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are making similar progress to other pupils. Pupils are making better progress because of improvements to the quality of teaching. The procedures for collecting information about pupils' standards and progress in English, mathematics and science are robust. Target-setting is accurately identifying the levels expected from pupils at the end of each year, and good systems are in place to monitor pupils' progress over time. Class teachers are contributing well to this process, providing detailed and accurate pupil assessments in order to gauge pupils' knowledge and understanding.

Senior staff and the subject leaders for English, mathematics and science are working well together to help raise standards and improve pupils' progress across the school. Strategies for ongoing monitoring, support, and challenge of teaching and learning across the three core subjects are effective in helping teachers to plan work that meets the learning needs of pupils, and build upon their prior learning.

### Teaching and learning

The school accurately perceives the quality of teaching to be satisfactory overall, but with an increasing proportion of good teaching. This represents a significant improvement since November 2006. Teachers' planning makes clear what it is that pupils are expected to learn and lessons are well structured. Effective questioning, which causes pupils to think and articulate their responses, is a feature in all classes. Good opportunities are provided for pupils to engage with their learning through purposeful activities and discussion with their peers and this enhances progress. The lively pace at which teachers conduct lessons generally stimulates and maintains pupils' interest, but, sometimes it is too quick and opportunities to embed understanding are missed. The school has worked hard to improve the quality of assessment of pupils' progress, particularly during lessons. This is beginning to make a difference to the way in which teachers plan their work to meet the learning needs of individual pupils. However, while the quality of assessment has improved, some teachers are better at identifying and acting on pupils' weaknesses than others. Classroom management is generally good and this is reflected in pupils' positive attitudes towards their work and behaviour. Some inadequate teaching remains but the school is aware of it and, in conjunction with the local authority, is taking appropriate steps to tackle it.

## Leadership and management

Good progress has been made with regard to improving the quality of leadership and management, particularly in relation to subject leaders. Determined and decisive leadership by the headteacher has brought about significant changes and led to improvements in provision. Good systems have been put into place to monitor teaching and learning. Feedback to staff, aligned with targeted support, has developed teachers' professional skills and helped to raise the quality of pupils' learning. Subject leaders have a good grasp of what needs to be done to raise standards further. They are now fully engaged in: analysing pupil data in order to set targets; tracking individual pupils' progress; monitoring standards of teaching and learning throughout the school; coaching colleagues; and liaising with local authority consultants in order to improve practice. Subject leaders in respect of English, mathematics and science are beginning to make a significant contribution to the school improvement process. The governing body has a good understanding of what the school leadership is trying to achieve. The governors receive informative updates of progress from the headteacher and are developing the ability to get the right balance between challenge and support.

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

Yours sincerely

Christopher Keeler  
Her Majesty's Inspector