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Mr T Heath
The headteacher
Nursted Community Primary School
Brickley Lane
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Dear Mr Heath

Ofsted monitoring of schools with a notice to improve

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 18 November 2008, for the time you gave to our phone discussions, and for the information which you provided before and during my visit. Please pass on my particular thanks to pupils with whom I held discussions.

Since the last inspection two class teachers have left the school. These have been replaced by one full time permanent appointment and two part time temporary teachers. One class teacher is also currently on maternity leave.

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 on 24 January 2008, the school was asked to:

- raise standards and achievement for pupils in Year 6 in English, mathematics and science, and for pupils in Years 3 to 5 in writing
- increase the proportion of teaching which is consistently good so that all pupils make good progress in lessons and over time
- improve the use of assessment so that all leaders can identify readily and monitor effectively standards and achievement in their subjects and phases.

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.

Overall standards at the end of Year 2 fell in 2007 and were significantly below the national average. This was in large part due to a significant fall in standards in writing. However, standards in writing rose greatly in 2008 and were similar to the

national average. Overall standards for this year group were in line with the national average.

Assessment data provided by the school indicates that after the last inspection the progress made by Year 6 pupils improved in English and mathematics. However, the 2008 Year 6 national test results indicate that the impact of strategies to raise standards in these subjects and science were limited. The school failed to achieve its targets, standards were well below the national average in all three core subjects, and the overall progress made by these pupils from Year 3 to Year 6 was inadequate.

Improvement in the progress made by pupils currently in the school is more encouraging. School tracking and inspection evidence indicates that current Year 6 pupils are making better progress in reading, writing, mathematics and science. They made good progress in reading and writing whilst in Year 5 and this has continued into Year 6. They are on track to achieve the 2009 end of Year 6 targets that have been set for them. Current Year 4 and Year 5 pupils are now making at least satisfactory progress in writing and are catching up the ground lost in the earlier years of Key Stage 2. Pupils currently in Year 3 attained standards in writing similar to the national average at the end of Year 2 and are making satisfactory progress this year.

The senior leadership team regularly monitors the quality of teaching and learning in all classes. A joint lesson observation carried out with the headteacher during this inspection confirmed the accuracy of his judgements. The quality of teaching and learning is improving. All teaching is at least satisfactory and an increasing proportion is good. This is beginning to have a positive impact on the progress made by pupils. The leadership team recognises that in order to continue to improve teaching and learning it needs to develop its strategies further to share good practice.

Lessons have a good focus on learning. Teachers routinely share learning objectives with pupils and also make clear to them what they need to do in order to show they have been successful in their learning. Lessons are characterised by good relationships between teachers and pupils. In all the lessons observed during this inspection the behaviour of students was at least satisfactory and often good. Teachers are now being held more accountable for the progress made by pupils. This has raised their level of expectation of what pupils are capable of achieving in lessons. Pupils report, and their work indicates, that teachers use a variety of activities in lessons. Pupils say they enjoy these activities and they are helping them to make better progress in lessons. In particular, science lessons are now more active. Pupils are given more opportunities to design and carry out investigations and there is less reliance on worksheets. This is having a positive impact on their development of scientific enquiry skills. The learning experience for pupils could be improved by further developing the opportunities for them to apply their literacy and numeracy skills in imaginative and creative cross-curricular contexts.

The quality of marking is improving and there is greater consistency in the application of the marking policy across the school. All marking observed during this inspection made clear to pupils how well they were doing. 'Next step' statements are increasingly making clear to pupils what they need to do to improve in literacy and numeracy.

The leadership team has improved the quality and frequency of pupil assessment. Formal pupil assessments in reading, writing and mathematics are now carried out three times a year. Teachers have always kept good records of individual pupils' progress. This information is now transferred by the headteacher to whole class tracking sheets and stored electronically. This enables the senior leadership team to track effectively the progress of pupils in English and mathematics across all year groups. This information is used to identify pupils who are underachieving. These pupils are discussed at regular pupil progress meetings and appropriate support or intervention strategies are agreed. The impact of these interventions is now beginning to be evaluated. Having established this system, there is now a need for the senior leadership team to involve the subject coordinators for English and mathematics more fully in this process.

Subject coordinators for English and mathematics are new in post. They are beginning to be given greater responsibility and held more accountable for the progress of pupils. Assessment results are analysed well in order to identify areas of weakness in pupils' learning across the school. This information is effectively communicated to class teachers. The coordinators have also been involved in scrutinising pupils' work and teachers' planning. They are starting to observe lessons but require further support in order to make accurate and consistent judgements about the quality of practice.

The local authority statement of action is well focused on the school's identified priorities for improvement. A range of effective support has been provided to the school and this has played an important part in improving teaching and learning and raising standards. The advisory headteacher has provided clear and well focused support to both the headteacher and subject coordinators.

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

Yours sincerely

Peter Sanderson
Her Majesty's Inspector