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Mrs F Cullen
Acting Headteacher
Nelson Primary School
Napier Road
East Ham
London
E6 2SE

Dear Mrs Cullen

Notice to improve: monitoring inspection of Nelson Primary School

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 5 October 2010 and for the information which you provided before and during my visit. Please extend my thanks to the pupils and to the chair of governors, as well as the representatives from the local authority, who gave time to speak to me.

As a result of the inspection on 20–21 January 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.

From a well-below-average starting point the majority of pupils are now making at least satisfactory progress and for some progress is now good. Progress is improving because, after significant changes to staffing in the autumn term, the school has a core of experienced senior staff with high levels of expertise. They are providing effective help to colleagues which has enabled them to improve their practice. Pupils in upper Key Stage 2 are doing particularly well, but progress is slower in other year groups. This is because the legacy of weak teaching is still impeding the rate of pupils' progress

Since the last inspection rigorous procedures have been implemented for assessing pupils and tracking their progress. They give a clear picture of individual pupils' attainment and progress in relation to national expectations and are an important tool for identifying those pupils who need additional support. A range of intervention

strategies is used to help these pupils catch up, and records show that these are effective in accelerating progress.

Monitoring of teaching by the school and the local authority and inspection evidence indicate that teaching is now at least satisfactory and improving. There is a steadily growing proportion of good teaching. The focus is now firmly on how to promote learning through independent thinking and practical activities that engage and motivate pupils. The most significant improvement is that teachers have higher expectations of pupils, particularly in their acquisition and use of vocabulary.

In the best lessons teaching is challenging and interesting activities fully capture pupils' interest. Here work is well matched to pupils' learning needs and pupils are encouraged to think about what they are learning, and to explain their thinking. Planning is detailed, ensuring that appropriate work is identified for pupils of differing abilities and sets clear learning intentions; consequently they know what they are expected to learn. Challenging but realistic targets have been set for attainment at the end of Year 6 and the present cohort is well on the way to achieving these. In some other lessons, learning is not so effective because pupils do not find work challenging enough. At times, teachers accept brief responses to their questions and miss opportunities to challenge pupils to think things through for themselves. Generally, marking gives pupils a clear indication of how well they are doing and how to improve. Teaching assistants make a considerable contribution to pupils' learning. They work closely with teachers, supporting individuals and small groups

Provision and outcomes within the Early Years Foundation Stage are showing too few signs of improvement. Activities are thoughtfully planned, but opportunities to develop children's language through dialogue are often missed because children have to work independently for too long without sufficient support from adults. Staff lack the expertise, guidance and training to understand fully the purpose behind each learning activity. Furthermore, adults do not always demonstrate grammatical accuracy in speaking and writing. This sets a bad example and limits children's progress. Consequently, the quality of adult interventions is inadequate overall. Although some observations of children's learning takes place, these are often focused on what children are doing, rather than on what they have learned and need to learn in future. The school's chosen scheme for the teaching of early reading, including systematic phonics, is not being implemented with the rigour necessary to ensure that children get a rapid start in this essential area. This lack of a firm foundation in reading, and hence writing, is the fundamental reason that pupils are underachieving higher up the school. The school must take urgent action to ensure that leadership and provision within this key stage is addressed.

The acting headteacher has created a very positive ethos. She leads the school extremely well and has real vision for its continuing development. Because of her leadership, there is a clear, shared philosophy behind everything that is done and pupils benefit from consistent provision, for instance, in teaching methods, the

curriculum and the approach to discipline. She is supported extremely well by a very committed and motivated senior leadership team who have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses within the school based upon a rigorous programme of monitoring and self-review. There is now a real sense that everyone in the school is united, working as a team to bring about required changes. The improvements in teaching are due to robust and regular monitoring and targeted support. This is beginning to have a positive impact, although the leadership team recognise that inconsistencies remain. The challenge for the school now is to ensure that the pace of improvement is further increased and that good practice is embedded into the life of the school.

The local authority has provided good support for the school. The consultative headteacher and school improvement partner continue to work closely with the school to adjust and amend the support needed as the school makes progress and has supported the school in establishing strong monitoring and evaluation systems.

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

Kekshan Salaria
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Accelerate pupils' progress and the pace of learning in lessons by:
 - ensuring teachers always plan and provide suitably challenging work for all pupils, especially the most able
 - reducing the amount of time teachers spend talking to the whole class so that pupils have longer to practise and develop key skill
 - giving pupils very clear guidance through marking that shows them how to improve their work and ensuring they have time to follow it up.

- Increase the effectiveness of leaders at all levels in driving improvements by:
 - collecting and analysing progress data more frequently and rigorously in order to provide support promptly for pupils who are falling behind
 - ensuring that planning for improvement covers all year groups and focuses on sustained improvement
 - conducting frequently rigorous checks on the quality of teaching to identify where improvement is needed
 - providing appropriate support and training to disseminate and build on the good practice that already exists
 - reviewing regularly the impact of strategies to raise attainment and taking alternative action where this is insufficient.