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27 September 2007

Mrs J Armstrong  
The Acting Headteacher  
The Bromley-Pensnett Primary School  
Bromley  
Pensnett  
Brierley Hill  
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Dear Mrs Armstrong

**SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF BROMLEY-PENSNETT  
PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Following my visit with Mary Usher-Clark, Additional Inspector, to your school on 18 and 19 September 2007, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures in February 2007. The monitoring inspection report is attached and the main judgements are set out below.

Progress since being subject to special measures – good.

Newly qualified teachers may be appointed.

This letter and monitoring inspection report 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.

I am copying this letter and the monitoring inspection report to the Secretary of State, the chair of governors and the Director of Children's Services for Dudley.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rob Hubbleday".

Rob Hubbleday  
H M Inspector

## SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING OF BROMLEY-PENSNETT PRIMARY SCHOOL

Report from the first monitoring inspection: 18 and 19 September 2007

### Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents, and met with the acting headteacher, consultant headteacher, deputy headteacher, senior staff, chair of governors, a parent governor, and a representative from the local authority (LA).

### Context

The school is no longer federated with a nearby secondary school and a new governing body was established from the beginning of this academic year. Apart from a brief return in the summer term, the permanent headteacher has been absent since November 2006. The school has had a number of temporary leaders but the current arrangements have been in place since Easter. An acting headteacher works at the school for three days each week. The deputy headteacher, supported by a consultant headteacher from within the LA's advisory service, assumes the role of acting headteacher for the remaining two days. By the beginning of the summer term, permanent appointments had been made to all of the senior and middle management vacancies which arose last year. In addition, three class teachers who left in the summer term have been replaced with experienced teachers.

### Achievement and standards

The 2007 national test results rose substantially at Key Stage 2, especially in English and science. They remained broadly the same in mathematics. The school exceeded its targets in English and did particularly well in writing. The English and science results were the best ever achieved by the school. Attainment was below average but most pupils made significant strides in their last year at school. A range of support strategies, some high quality teaching, and rapidly improving behaviour all contributed to these results.

Standards in the current Year 6 look set to continue this improvement. Around two thirds of the pupils in this year group are on track to reach the expected Level 4.

At Key Stage 1, the 2007 test results did not rise in a similar fashion. Attainment remained exceptionally low even though there was a small improvement in science. The results in reading and mathematics were broadly similar to the previous year's but there was a sharp decline in writing, with only 45% of pupils reaching the minimum expected Level 2c. The school accepts that many pupils made inadequate progress and that basic skills remain weak because of shortcomings in provision from the Foundation Stage onwards. The root causes of these weaknesses are being tackled vigorously but it is too early to judge whether pupils are now making significantly better progress.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in February 2007:

- improve pupils' achievement, especially in English and science – satisfactory.

## Personal development and well-being

The school reports that the pupils' behaviour had been a considerable concern in the academic year 2006–07. Significant progress was made in the half term immediately before the inspection and it was not judged to be a priority for improvement by the inspection team in February. Nevertheless, the school has continued to focus attention on this aspect, with evident success. The number of days lost to exclusions has reduced from 151 in the summer and autumn terms of 2006 to nine in the spring and summer terms of 2007. During the monitoring visit, pupils were very well behaved and most had good attitudes to learning. A significant minority, however, lack confidence in their abilities and need substantial encouragement to participate energetically in lessons.

Lateness and absence are stringently followed up and frequent rewards are given to classes and individuals to acknowledge good attendance. Parents receive an informative newsletter about the school's performance and factors which affect it. The school's efforts have been slow to show up in data but there has been a marked improvement in attendance in the first two weeks of this year compared with the same period last year.

## Quality of provision

The quality of teaching has improved and the significant proportion of teaching which was regularly inadequate has been eliminated. The inspectors' judgements accord with those of the school: about a third of the teaching is of consistently good quality and that the remainder is generally satisfactory. There is an increasing consistency of approach and a growing understanding about the features of effective lessons. The teachers are well organised and work hard to provide well structured lessons which focus systematically on meeting ambitious targets. They make extensive use of techniques to develop the pupils' understanding and involvement, such as pairing them up to discuss insights as the lesson proceeds. Teaching assistants are used effectively to support individuals and groups. They are well briefed and the level of communication between them and the teachers is good. There is a strong focus on developing the pupils' skills in evaluating their own progress. Displays in each classroom, for example, include a very clear description of the criteria for different levels of performance in the core subjects. In the most effective teaching, pupils were quickly drawn into giving their full attention to a well paced variety of activities. In the least effective practice, the slow pace of learning and an over dependence on the teacher doing most of the talking meant that too little emphasis was given to the pupils' potential contributions and pupils lost their concentration.

Although the Foundation Stage was not identified as an area for improvement in the inspection of February 2007, the school has ensured that it has built on the emerging improvements from that time. It is very well managed and provision has strengthened further. All the practitioners have a shared understanding about the nature of the learning experiences they wish to promote and their aims are translated into effective practice through rigorous planning and careful observation of the pupils.

The school has made a considerable effort to introduce a systematic approach to assessment. The baseline data in all year groups has been reviewed and, where necessary, realigned. Teachers now have the necessary information to plan work at an appropriate level. Setting arrangements have been extended and this has had some benefits, especially for the more able pupils. However, in some year groups, lesson planning for pupils of lower ability lacks sufficient precision to promote good learning. Teachers have tended to plan to the scheme of work for their age group without making enough allowance for the pupils' starting points.

The school has improved the coherence of its support for pupils with learning difficulties. The high proportion of pupils on its register of special needs has been reviewed to clarify the extent of need and ensure that provision is better targeted. The school is now able to distinguish between underachieving pupils and those with special needs, and to provide appropriately for them from a range of intervention programmes.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in February 2007:

- improve the quality and consistency of the teaching so that pupils make more rapid progress – good.

#### Leadership and management

The school is well led, albeit on a temporary basis. The acting headteacher, deputy headteacher and the consultant headteacher have worked to their strengths and the school has benefited from the resulting sharpness of focus. The acting headteacher has brought her experience to bear on teaching and learning and the development of leadership potential amongst other staff. The consultant headteacher has concentrated on management issues such as finance and staffing. Both have succeeded in placing the school on a much more settled footing. The budget is balanced, staffing is secure, and there is now a committed team of enthusiastic teachers and teaching assistants who are clear about what is expected.

The school has profited from the appointment of a number of experienced senior and middle managers. They have gelled as a team and are actively developing structures to sustain the school's progress. The deputy headteacher, who was appointed a few days before the inspection in February, has continued to build on the improvements instigated by the acting headteacher at that time. In particular, strategies to manage behaviour have been consolidated. Great importance has been attached to safeguarding improvements and preserving continuity in the future. The deputy headteacher, for example, shadows the acting headteacher's role to ensure there is consistency in day-to-day management of the school across the week. Similarly, several of the curriculum leadership roles of other staff are shared by two people.

A comprehensive programme of monitoring has led to significant improvements in consistency of practice. Planning for improvement is very well established. The raising achievement plan has provided a good framework for managing initiatives and has been well underpinned by separate plans for each key issue identified in the last report. Leaders and managers have ensured that deadlines for implementing actions have been met. They are keen to begin using data more fully to measure the

impact of their work and are aware of the crucial importance of assessment information. The new coordinators for this area have successfully overseen significant developments in a short space of time.

Governors report that since the school was placed in special measures it has risen to the challenge of making rapid improvement. The chair of governors has a realistic understanding of the school's position and is determined that the new governing body will play a full part in the school's recovery.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in February 2007:

- bring greater continuity to the membership and work of both the senior leadership team and the staff as a whole, in order to raise standards as quickly as possible – good.

#### External support

The local authority's statement of action was judged acceptable by Ofsted and the support it detailed has proved to be effective. In particular, arrangements for leadership and management have been highly successful. Support from various advisory staff has been timely and well received, leading to important improvements in provision, for instance for pupils with learning difficulties. There are robust systems for monitoring the school's progress and the targets the LA set for this term have been met.

#### Priorities for further improvement

- Ensure that lesson planning for pupils of lower ability is more precisely matched to need.