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7 February 2011

Mrs R Bishop
Headteacher
Cathcart Street Primary School
Dover Close
Birkenhead
Merseyside
CH41 3JY

Dear Mrs Bishop,

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools: monitoring inspection of Cathcart Street Primary School

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 8 February 2011, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during the inspection. Please pass on my thanks to the pupils who gave up some of their lunchtime to talk with me and to the Chair of the Governing Body and staff for their time and courtesy.

Since the last inspection, there have been considerable changes to the staffing including the appointment of a new deputy headteacher and two new class teachers. There is a newly formed leadership team and all of the teaching staff are new to the age groups they are teaching. The school has been involved with the local authority 'pupil places review' and has recently accepted approximately ten new pupils to the school from a neighbouring school facing closure.

As a result of the inspection on 3 December 2009, 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 has made satisfactory progress in making improvements and satisfactory progress in demonstrating a better capacity for sustained improvement.

Results of the 2010 Key Stage 2 national assessments show an improvement from the previous year and place the school broadly in line with national expectations. Most noticeable improvements can be seen in English. At the end of Key Stage 1 more pupils are reaching the level expected for their age, although no pupils achieved the higher level of attainment. Pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals achieve well across the school. The progress pupils make has also improved and is now significantly better than expected. Again, this is most noticeable in English although standards in mathematics have also improved.

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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

Leaders of the school judge that teaching and learning have improved. Improving the quality of provision has been a focus for the school and effective links have been made with the local authority to develop and promote this work. The school has adopted a more cooperative approach to learning and cross-curricular work ensures lessons are more purposeful and relevant. As one pupil said, 'lessons are more interesting and fun.' Good use is made of the interactive whiteboards to engage learners. Marking of pupils' work has improved and pupils are better informed in how to improve their work. In the most effective lessons, activities are matched to meet pupils' needs and pupils work collaboratively. This is not the case in all lessons and there are instances when the pace of learning slows and in one lesson, poor behaviour was a significant barrier to learning. There is a cross-curricular approach to the teaching of science but, as this investigative learning is in its development stage, it is too early to evaluate its impact on pupils' achievements. Improved systems and procedures are in place to track individuals and groups of pupils. Systems for monitoring include a cycle of moderation, pupil progress meetings, lesson observations, planning and book scrutiny. While these processes are in place, the school has yet to evaluate, embed and sustain the resulting developments made.

Plans are in place to provide enhanced provision for the Early Years Foundation Stage to ensure children can learn and play outside in all weathers. Due to the local authority restructuring review this has not yet been implemented. During the inspection, the inspector observed the outdoor environment used to good effect for den building linked to the theme of 'The Jungle.' However, there are ways in which this provision could be developed further to ensure the environment is more welcoming and appealing.

Strategies are in place to raise attendance levels and ensure pupils' punctuality. While attendance rates remain low, there are improvements from the previous year and fewer pupils are now persistently absent. Levels of attendance are rigorously monitored by the headteacher with support from the local authority. Pupils understand why it is important to attend school regularly and a positive reward system is popular with pupils.

Strong links between the school and local authority exist. The school is taking ideas, initiatives and projects on board and support is focused on improving teaching and learning to raise achievement. Tailored support is provided based on an accurate view of strengths and weaknesses held by the senior leaders in school.

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

Mrs Jane Millward
Her Majesty's Inspector



Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place on 3 December 2009

- Raise standards in mathematics and science by:
 - fully implementing the existing plans to improve teaching and learning in both subjects.
- Raise the quality of teaching from satisfactory to at least good by:
 - making sure that teachers are consistently clear about what pupils are to learn during lessons
 - making sure that the way that teachers mark pupils' work consistently informs pupils about what they need to do to improve.
- Improve the quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage by:
 - providing facilities and equipment so that children can learn and play outside in all weathers.
- Raise attendance levels by:
 - encouraging the attendance of those pupils who are too regularly absent.