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21 October 2010

Mrs Jo Davies
Headteacher
Carr Mill Primary School
Kentmere Avenue
St Helens
Merseyside
WA11 7PQ

Dear Mrs Davies

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools: monitoring inspection of Carr Mill Primary School

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 20 October 2010, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during the inspection. I observed six lessons and looked at a range of school documentation including pupil progress data, pupils' exercise books, monitoring records and the school raising attainment plan.

Since the last inspection there have been several changes to staffing. You started as headteacher in September 2009, following the retirement of the previous headteacher. A reduction in pupil numbers resulted in two teachers leaving the school and not being replaced. Since September 2010, the deputy headteacher has class responsibility and increased her teaching commitment to virtually full time.

As a result of the inspection on 26 and 27 January 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 **good** progress in making improvements and **good** progress in demonstrating a better capacity for sustained improvement.

Since the last inspection, you and your senior leadership team, well supported by all staff, have worked extremely hard to raise standards in mathematics and English and to improve pupils' progress. You have introduced new ways of working which have raised staff expectations. These include: careful management of learning time, a whole-school behaviour policy, 'star skills' and 'star write' and a presentation and marking policy. These initiatives are promoting consistency across the school. Staff

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now teach the basic skills in a systematic way. As a result, pupils who were struggling to read, write and spell are now making rapid progress. Pupils' levels of attainment in both Key Stage 1 and 2 improved significantly in 2010. Pupils attained the nationally expected levels in mathematics, reading and writing for 7 and 11-year-olds and the school achieved its best results for a number of years. The good quality of pupils' work in exercise books, displayed in the classrooms and corridors is evidence of the impact and success of these strategies.

During this inspection, I observed all teachers teach in Key Stage 1 and 2. The quality of lessons ranged from outstanding to inadequate. Where teaching was good or better, the teachers knew the pupils' levels of ability well and matched tasks accordingly. For example, in one lesson the teacher had a small mixed-age group for 'star skills'. They were learning how to write the sound /oy/ and learning the difference between 'oi' and 'oy'. During the lesson, pupils made excellent progress and by the end were able to decide which of the two spellings they needed for a particular word. They applied this knowledge accurately in their writing, reading and in a game of word bingo. In a mathematics lesson, more-able pupils were designing a net for a cuboid. They found this very challenging. However, because the teacher offered well judged support, by the end of the lesson, the entire group succeeded and were proud to show their work. Relationships between staff and pupils are strong, resulting in pupils' resilience to continue trying even when they find the task difficult. Where teaching was inadequate, it linked to the teacher's poor subject knowledge, weak assessment of pupils' progress during the lesson and poor management of learning time.

You and the subject leaders for mathematics and English have an accurate view of the quality of teaching and learning across the school. Staff report that you provide robust feedback on the quality of lessons and that consequently, teachers know how to improve. You document this clearly and your written evaluations demonstrate your excellent understanding of pupils' learning needs. You identify where additional training is required and work well with the local authority and other consultants to meet individual staff needs. This is improving the quality of teaching and learning overall, but you have not yet fully eradicated some of the weaknesses in lessons identified at the last inspection. Nonetheless, given the improvements made, your drive and determination to improve outcomes for pupils together with the high quality support from the local authority, governors, senior leaders and staff it is clear there is a growing capacity for sustained improvement.

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

Gill Jones
Her Majesty's Inspector

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Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in January 2009.

- Raise standards in English and mathematics.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning to be at least consistently good throughout the school.
- Rigorously monitor and evaluate the quality of teaching and learning to enable improvements to be made where they are needed.