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16 June 2011

Mrs Sylvia Rizak
Headteacher
The Richard Heathcote Community Primary School
The Drive
Alsagers Bank
Stoke-on-Trent
ST7 8BB

Dear Mrs Rizak

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools: monitoring inspection of The Richard Heathcote Community Primary School

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 15 June 2011, for the time you gave to our discussions and for the information which you provided before and during the inspection. Please also pass on my thanks to the pupils and to the Chair of the Governing Body.

During my visit, I noted several staff changes since the last inspection. The deputy headteacher now has a teaching responsibility and has taken on the role of Early Years Foundation Stage leader. A new subject leader for English has been appointed and the Year 5/6 class is being taught by a temporary teacher for one year while the permanent teacher is absent.

As a result of the inspection on 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 has made good progress in making improvements and good progress in demonstrating a better capacity for sustained improvement.

Attainment in 2010 was similar to that seen in 2009, with the broadly average attainment in mathematics lagging behind the higher standards achieved in English. The quality of teaching has improved and observations made during this inspection found it to be good in all lessons and outstanding in one. The current Year 6 pupils are expected to achieve in line with age-related expectations by the time they leave.



Work to improve the quality of the curriculum has been undertaken with enthusiasm. Meaningful links between subjects require pupils to practise their literacy and numeracy skills in a range of practical contexts. Projects and topics provide a creative impetus for learning and provide opportunities for pupils to use their initiative and to achieve in many different ways. Pupils speak enthusiastically about the range of trips, visits and exciting school events, particularly in the arts, and how these help to make learning more interesting and fun.

Lesson monitoring, staff training and a more systematic approach to assessment and the tracking of pupils' progress have led to better teaching. Pupils now receive more consistent feedback about how to improve their work. The improved assessment procedures help teachers to plan lessons that build more effectively on pupils' existing skills. Consequently, the level of challenge offered to most pupils is appropriate. In a strong lesson, the use of self- and peer-assessment, together with many opportunities for discussion, challenged pupils to explain their thinking and evaluate their progress. This helped to reinforce their understanding and, as they worked together to find creative solutions to a problem, pupils' joy of learning was clear to see. Nevertheless, in some lessons, work given to the less-able and more-able pupils is not focused sharply enough on their specific academic needs.

The governing body has an accurate view of the school's strengths and priorities for future development and brings a balance of challenge and support to its role. Assistance from the local authority has been effective in supporting subject leadership, especially in English, and in developing more consistent assessment procedures across the school.

The headteacher, ably supported by the deputy headteacher, provides clear-sighted and supportive leadership. Throughout the school, the strong sense of teamwork, coupled with evaluative attitudes towards school improvement, provides a clear indication that the school's capacity for sustained improvement has been strengthened.

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

Martin Pye
Additional Inspector

Annex

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

- Develop a more effective creative curriculum that:
 - links subjects together so that pupils improve and use their skills in practical contexts
 - includes planned opportunities for pupils to use their initiative and take more responsibility for their own learning.

- Improve teaching by:
 - ensuring that lessons build on pupils' existing skills more effectively
 - assessing pupils' understanding more closely during lessons and adjusting the level of challenge accordingly
 - ensuring that the majority of lessons are good or better as soon as possible.