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29 March 2012

Mr M Copping  
Headteacher  
Yew Tree Primary School (with Designated Special Provision)  
The Avenue  
Halewood  
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L26 1UU

Dear Mr Copping

**Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools with an additional focus on behaviour: Yew Tree Primary School (with Designated Special Provision)**

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 27 March 2012. I am grateful to the Chair of the Governing Body and a representative from the local authority for sparing the time to talk with me. It was a pleasure to speak to pupils, so please pass on my thanks to them also.

Since the previous inspection, the school has moved locations into a new school site and the local special school has been incorporated into Yew Tree, as part of designated special provision. A new substantive headteacher has been appointed and a new senior leadership team is in place. One new teacher has joined the school. Six new parent governors have joined the governing body.

As a result of the inspection in November 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:

satisfactory progress in making improvements

and

the effectiveness of the school in improving pupils' behaviour is satisfactory.

January 2012



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

## **Achievement of pupils at the school**

A focus on improving teaching and learning has resulted in pupils beginning to make better progress and starting to achieve the levels of which they are capable. Results of national assessment tests in 2011 indicate that attainment at the end of Year 6 is improving and is now broadly in line with the national average. Pupils enter the school with low starting points. Internal data indicate that progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage is improving so that more children start Year 1 with the attainment expected for their age and are ready to access the National Curriculum. Progress in Key Stage 1 is now increasing and more pupils are on track to reach or exceed age-related expectations. This is because the school's tracking is used to better effect to ensure activities are matched to pupils' abilities. Key Stage 2 attainment in 2011 shows that, although broadly in line with national expectations, too few pupils achieved the higher level of attainment, especially in English. Overall, boys attained better than the girls. Pupils known to be eligible for free school meals attained better than their peers nationally and the school is helping lower attaining groups of pupils, such as those with special educational needs, to catch up with others.

## **The quality of teaching**

Improving the quality of teaching and learning is a priority for the school. Assessment information has improved and supports teachers in knowing what each pupil is capable of achieving. This enables them to intervene at an earlier stage when pupils start to fall behind. However, assessments made on pupils' work through marking are inconsistent and do not always identify gaps in their learning so that pupils are sometimes unsure of the next steps required. In some instances this hampers progress, as teachers do not accurately plan activities based on pupils' prior knowledge. Some literacy marking is highly effective and pupils are clearly guided about how to improve. Cross-curricular work is having a better impact on pupils' engagement. Pupils report that learning is fun when studying topic work. Planning formats have improved, as teachers now make reference to links between subjects. School leaders are securing consistency in the quality of provision through regular monitoring of teaching. For example, recent observations and feedback to staff have focused on challenging the more-able pupils in lessons.

## **Behaviour and safety of pupils**

Pupils report they mostly feel safe in school. Senior leaders have developed more effective policies and procedures to improve behaviour. Sensible steps have been taken to involve staff and pupils in these initiatives. Behaviour at lunch time has improved through providing new play equipment and training the older pupils as play leaders. As a result, incidents of poor behaviour are declining and permanent exclusions have reduced. A new teaching and learning policy has had a positive impact on behaviour in lessons, with both learners and teachers identifying how they will contribute to better learning. For example, teachers commit to making lessons more interesting and exciting using visits and visitors. Pupil-voice

is now used to a greater extent to get pupils more involved in supporting good behaviour, such as in developing an anti-bullying charter.

Pupils show a better awareness of the dangers of different types of bullying, including racism and name calling. Rightly, there are plans to heighten pupils' awareness of cyber bullying. Curriculum content, such as a 'social and emotional aspects of learning' programme, is better planned to improve pupils' awareness of risk and how to stay safe. The learning mentor plays a greater role in supporting behaviour. Her role has been clarified and she works more closely with pupils to improve specific aspects of behaviour, for example with older pupils on improving their self-esteem.

There are, however, still some instances of poor behaviour. Pupils report these are usually resolved, but teachers are inconsistent in dealing with them. There is insufficient record keeping about incidents of low-level disruption, leading to a lack of clarity about the underlying causes, how to tackle them and how to check the impact made.

Attendance rates have improved due to an increased focus on monitoring absence. The learning mentor, who has responsibility for this work, holds weekly meetings with the headteacher to ensure the school is on track for improving attendance. Good attendance is encouraged and incentives are an effective stimulus to pupils. An improving range of strategies to encourage pupils to come to school have now been employed, such as information in newsletters and the school website, texting and 'phone calls to parents and carers. Pupils, as a result, are now more punctual and attend school more regularly.

### **The quality of leadership and management of the school**

The new headteacher has gained the confidence of staff, governors and local authority. He has devised a comprehensive school development plan focused on accurate and relevant priorities, including those identified in the last inspection. Success criteria are clear and progress towards them is securely measured. Systems to bring about improvements are better and senior leaders focused more closely on improving outcomes for pupils. Governors have received training to enable them to be more effective. They are beginning to hold the school more strongly to account, including by establishing links with subject leaders across the school. Their understanding of how to interpret assessment data so as to challenge the school is improving.

The role of subject leaders remains underdeveloped, although satisfactory plans are in place to improve their impact on their subject areas. Their involvement in analysing assessment information and evaluating their areas of responsibility is inconsistent and, as a result, their ability to plan for improvement is variable.

The local authority has confidence that the school is improving. It has facilitated the close working of a local cluster of schools through what it terms a 'self-improving system'. This

provides appropriate and relevant support tailored to the school's needs, and is suitably quality assured by the local authority.

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

Jane Millward  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Annex**

### **The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in November 2010.**

- Raise pupils' attainment and further accelerate their progress in English and mathematics by ensuring that:
  - assessment information is consistently used to identify and address gaps in pupils' learning
  - teachers consistently provide appropriate tasks in lessons which challenge all learners, especially the more able, to achieve their full potential
  - provide more opportunities for pupils to apply their literacy and numeracy skills within all subjects of the curriculum
  - the leadership roles of subject leaders are fully developed.
  
- Raise attendance levels by:
  - working with pupils, parents and carers to improve attendance and punctuality
  - reducing the number of persistently absent pupils and holidays taken in term time.