

12 March 2007

Mr Peter King  
Headteacher  
Corporation Road Community Primary School  
Corporation Road  
Darlington  
County Durham  
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Dear Mr King

#### OFSTED MONITORING OF NOTICE TO IMPROVE

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 9 March 2007, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during my visit. In particular, please pass on my thanks to the chair of governors and those staff and pupils who gave their time to discuss matters with me.

This letter 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.

As a result of the inspection in July 2006, the school was asked to: improve pupils' progress in English through better use of assessment information to ensure that work reflects the range of abilities in each class; extend the role of subject leaders in leading aspects of school improvement; ensure that teaching strategies in the Foundation Stage are better matched to the way that young children learn; provide more opportunities for pupils to use their literacy, numeracy and information, communication and technology (ICT) skills in other subjects; and improve attendance.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time the school is making satisfactory progress overall and good progress in relation to reducing absence rates.

Since the July 2006 inspection a new headteacher has been appointed following the retirement of the previous post-holder. During the autumn term the school was lead by the deputy headteacher until the new headteacher

took up post in January 2007. The deputy headteacher will leave in April 2007 to take up headship in another school.

Important changes have been made to improve the school's effectiveness in tackling its weaknesses. In particular, rigorous monitoring by senior staff has provided a better understanding of where improvement is required. As a consequence, development activities are well targeted and mainly effective. In addition, teachers and subject leaders now recognise more clearly their role in raising standards. They are held increasingly accountable for the progress which pupils make and the standards they achieve.

Standards in English have been significantly below average at Key Stages 1 and 2 over time and remain so. Pupils are, however, making better progress because the school's use of assessment information is helping to identify those pupils who are under-achieving. The extra help these pupils now receive is effectively supporting their improvement. Nonetheless, targets remain very low and reflect substantial underachievement by pupils in previous years. Most teachers have improved their use of assessment information when preparing lessons but there is variability across the school. While there is good practice - for example in Year 4 where the teacher's knowledge of pupils' prior attainment is used to provide activities which are well matched to their learning needs - this is not yet consistently the case elsewhere.

Subject leaders have greater responsibility for the performance of their subjects and are becoming increasingly effective. They understand the need to improve teaching and learning and raise standards. They routinely scrutinise pupils' work and provide clear evidence about strengths and weaknesses in pupils' performance. This is reported to class teachers, providing evidence of where improvement is required. Significantly, the scrutiny of pupils' work directly involves governors working alongside subject leaders. This is strengthening the role of governors in school improvement and enhancing their capacity to challenge the school about its performance.

Appropriate organisational changes have been made to the Foundation Stage area and planned activities adequately reflect the requirements of the Foundation Stage curriculum. Teaching strategies have been modified to provide a suitable balance between tasks that are led directly by adults and activities that children choose themselves. Adults and children interact well and with purpose, enabling the children to make progress. Children enjoy their learning and play cooperatively with each other. Resources are managed well to support the range of activities on offer.

There is increasing awareness amongst the school's senior leaders of the need to provide more opportunities for pupils to use their literacy, numeracy and ICT skills across the curriculum. Evidence in pupils' workbooks demonstrates that, while opportunities are being provided, they are not planned for systematically. The school's immediate priorities are focused on improving standards in literacy and numeracy. Currently, the school has inadequate ICT resources and this has hampered developments in this area for some time. However, work under way to install new ICT facilities is due for completion by April 2007. This will significantly enhance the school's capacity to deliver an appropriate ICT curriculum.

Attendance rates have improved well since the inspection and are now broadly average. The school has given high priority to attendance matters and communicated new expectations to parents. Senior leaders, supported directly by staff from the local authority (LA), have robustly challenged the poorest attenders and their families, using fixed-penalty notices where necessary. Simultaneously, the school has introduced rewards for higher attendance. These are valued by pupils and are making a strong contribution to improvement in this area.

Personnel from the LA have worked in close partnership with the school to address the inspection issues, and with some success. Good support has been provided for the acting headteacher, during the autumn term 2006, and for the new headteacher since he arrived in January 2007. The LA's statement of action has appropriately guided its actions following the inspection but this now requires review in response to the school's much improved leadership capacity. In particular, greater clarity is required with respect to when the LA expects the school to assume fuller responsibility for tackling remaining weaknesses.

I hope that you have found the visit helpful in promoting improvement in your school.

Yours sincerely

Tom Grieveson  
Her Majesty's Inspector