

17 October 2007

Mrs J Appleton
Headteacher
Meadowbank Primary School
Councillor Lane
Cheadle
Cheshire
SK8 2LE

Dear Mrs Appleton

Ofsted monitoring of schools with a Notice to Improve

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 16 October 2007, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during my visit. I am also grateful to the governors and the local authority for assistance with this visit.

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 February 2007, the school was asked to

- Raise achievement and standards for the most able and least capable pupils in Key Stage 2 in English and for all pupils in science
- Use assessment in planning and throughout the delivery of all lessons so that the learning needs are met
- Ensure that parents are fully informed about their children's progress and developments in school
- Increase opportunities for all pupils in the school's specialist provision to be included in mainstream lessons.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time the school is making satisfactory progress in addressing the issues for improvement.

The school has responded positively to the issues identified at its inspection in February. The headteacher, supported well by staff and governors, has shown great resolve in leading the school through a period of much change and disruption. Morale is improving, expectations have been raised and staff are increasingly receptive to new ideas. For example, senior staff have taken every opportunity to benefit from the effective support of the local authority to get the school back on track. In doing so, efforts have been clearly focused on raising achievement and on improving the quality of teaching.

Pupils always try their best and they are keen to do well. They have good attitudes to learning: even when activities are less engaging, they work hard and behave well.

Pupils' work in lessons and in their books, together with the school's own assessment data, shows that the progress of the most able and least capable pupils is beginning to accelerate. This is because the school has successfully introduced several new strategies to improve pupils' achievement. For example, procedures for assessing the effectiveness of the school's performance and for setting challenging targets for pupils are more effective and are leading to improvements in classroom practice. There are clear expectations of the progress pupils should make each year. Staff are taking greater responsibility for their actions and are acting more decisively in their analysis of data. Tracking systems are more effective in identifying pupils who are underachieving. There are regular reviews of how well pupils are progressing. As a result the school is better placed to judge how well pupils are achieving and to plan appropriate support. Teachers are gaining confidence in judging the level of pupils' work and have a better understanding of using assessments to judge what pupils can do and what they need to learn next, although this is not yet consistent in some classes.

Increased opportunities for pupils to use and apply their knowledge in lesson activities are leading to a faster rate of achievement in science. For example, pupils in Year 6 learned what would happen to the force required to lift an object in water by investigating, predicting and recording their own findings in carefully crafted practical activities.

There have been improvements in teaching, including how well lessons are planned for different abilities, and in the use of success criteria to improve pupils' understanding. The teaching is mainly satisfactory with some that is good. The better lessons had a brisk pace and achieved their objectives well. Teachers have positive relationships with pupils and expectations are high. In these lessons, pupils are actively engaged in their learning and are presented with a good range of practical activities. Effective questioning keeps pupils on their toes, which results in good levels of interest and enthusiasm. For example, children in the Nursery enjoyed learning how to describe the sounds made by a range of different instruments by investigating and discussing their own observations, with skilful prompting by the class teacher.

Teaching assistants provide good quality support, enabling all pupils to play a full part in lessons and activities.

Where teaching is less strong, assessment information is not used consistently well to meet the needs of all pupils. Teachers' subject knowledge is variable. The range of teaching styles is limited, work is over-directed and pupils are not sufficiently engaged in many of the activities. Some of the higher attaining pupils are not challenged enough. New learning does not always build on pupils' prior knowledge. Too many worksheets are used, limiting the pupil's scope to record what they have learned. This means that learning is not as effective as it could be because pupils are not always sufficiently involved in making decisions and directing their own work. In these lessons, the pace of learning slows because teaching is largely focused on the

delivery of the lesson materials rather than on the quality of pupils' learning and interaction.

There have been improvements in the way the school communicates with parents through increased contact, regular consultation and the work of the newly appointed parent adviser. As a result, parents are encouraged to support the school and are kept well informed about the progress their children are making through reports, parents' evenings and joint training events. Their knowledge of developments in school is enhanced through newsletters, coffee mornings and regular correspondence.

The school has ensured that the learning of pupils in the specialist provision is of the same quality as their peers and is not adversely affected. This is because procedures for assessing their progress and for setting targets are now in place. In addition, all pupils are now taught within their own year groups and occasions when they are withdrawn from mainstream lessons are kept to a minimum.

The school is well placed to improve further, with continued support from the local authority. The whole-school commitment to improvement and the positive way the school acts upon advice have strengthened its capacity to improve.

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

Yours sincerely

Steve Isherwood
Her Majesty's Inspector