

15 November 2007

Mr Brian Esland
Headteacher
Stephenson Memorial Primary School
Martin Road
Wallsend
Tyne and Wear
NE28 0AG

Dear Mr Esland

Ofsted Monitoring of Schools with Notice to Improve

Thank you for the help which you and your staff, the chair of governors and the local authority gave me when I inspected your school on 14 November 2007. Please pass on my thanks to the children for their positive and confident contribution.

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 on 13–14 March 2007, the school was asked to:

- ensure that pupils make at least satisfactory progress as they move through the school
- improve the quality and quantity of pupils' writing
- raise standards in English and mathematics by improving basic skills
- improve the frequency and rigour of monitoring and evaluation in order to tackle underachievement.

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 and in raising the pupils' achievements.

The school has made satisfactory progress in tackling the issue relating to pupils' progress. The setting of half-termly curricular targets in reading, writing and mathematics is working well. Most teachers use them regularly and pupils are keen to achieve them. Progress in lessons is better, with no evidence of inadequate teaching. However, progress at the beginning of lessons is inconsistent because the quality in the introductions to new learning varies. Progress in the Foundation Stage is at least satisfactory indoors, but there is not enough challenge in the outdoor learning area for the Reception children. In Year 1, activities are planned well to

match pupils' different needs but teachers provide too many tasks that require adult support and not enough independent activities. This results in progress slowing because adults cannot give each group the support they need.

The school has made good progress in improving the quality and quantity of pupils' writing. A much higher priority has now been given to this aspect of pupils' work. The school is adopting the Primary Strategy well and now provides a well-balanced curriculum that ensures that pupils develop skills across a range of different genres. Senior staff have made good use of key writing courses that they have attended to introduce new teaching strategies successfully throughout the school. The focus on comparing the quality of pupils' work at the beginning of a new block of work with the end of the programme is working well. The use of key criteria for writing in different genres is shared effectively with pupils and is raising standards. Pupils now produce a good volume of work. Progress in the Foundation Stage has increased due to the use of materials related to their early reading skills.

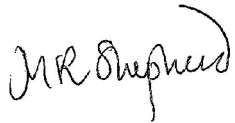
The school has made satisfactory progress in raising standards in English and mathematics by improving basic skills. The strategy of providing discrete basic skills lessons in English is working well. It has rightly concentrated on writing skills, which are being taught consistently. Pupils are making at least satisfactory progress and standards are rising. There is a clear policy for marking which teachers use well, so pupils clearly understand how to improve their writing. Standards in handwriting are much improved. The school is now in a good position to extend the successful strategies used in writing to raise standards in reading and mathematics. The school has not analysed how to extend pupils' basic skills in other subjects of the curriculum. The school is well on the way to gaining the Basic Skills Quality Mark, thanks to the work of a Primary Consultant, the deputy headteacher and other senior staff.

The school has made satisfactory progress in improving monitoring and evaluation. The monitoring of pupils' progress is significantly better. There is a much stronger focus on tracking their progress in each class, identifying underachievement and providing additional support for individuals. Tracking systems are clear and the assessment team analyses this data well, although not all of the senior leaders are as confident in the skills of analysis. The monitoring of teaching has increased and development issues are used effectively in planning future staff training. However, senior leaders and governors do not use the national data well enough to evaluate the school's performance. In addition, they are not yet using the self-evaluation process rigorously enough to analyse the school's strengths and weaknesses.

The local authority has supported the school very well, guiding it effectively in producing and implementing a clear action plan. It provides well-focused specialist support for staff development. The whole-school commitment to improving its provision means that this support is being used well to overcome the school's weaknesses.

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

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "MR Shepherd". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial "M".

Margaret Shepherd
Additional Inspector