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Ms Sue Finch
Headteacher
Westminster Primary School
John Street
Ellesmere Port
Cheshire
CH65 2ED

Dear Ms Finch

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 31 October 2007, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during my visit. Please pass on my thanks to the chair of governors, the representative from the local authority and the pupils with whom I spoke. They all helped me to evaluate the progress the school is making.

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 March 2007 the school was asked to: improve standards in English, mathematics and science, particularly at Key Stage 2; improve the impact of teaching on pupils' learning to ensure that all groups make adequate progress; and ensure that pupils experience the full curriculum for information and communication technology (ICT) and have opportunities to consolidate and develop their skills in other subject areas.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time the school is making inadequate progress in addressing the issues for improvement and in raising the pupils' achievement.

The headteacher is determined that the weaknesses identified by the inspection are addressed. The recently appointed chair of governors is also resolute that the school receives the support and challenge necessary to ensure improvement. Since the time of the last inspection, however, the school has faced a number of difficult staffing issues, which have taken much time and effort to resolve. As well as staff leaving and new staff being very recently appointed, some have also moved to teach different year groups. During this period pupils have had a number of different

teachers. Pupils comment that although this has been a disruption to their learning the current teachers are helping them by ensuring behaviour in lessons is improving. Some of the recent appointments are at present also only temporary.

The 2007 national assessments for Year 2 pupils show that standards fell significantly overall, with reading being the weakest performing area. Standards in writing also fell and continue to be exceptionally low. Standards in mathematics, which were broadly average in 2006, fell significantly to an exceptionally low level also. The provisional national tests results for Year 6 pupils in 2007 show that here too standards remain exceptionally low. In English, they have fallen significantly since the time of the last inspection. In science, they also remain exceptionally low. Standards in mathematics, although improved, remain at an exceptionally low level. The proportion of pupils at an early stage of learning English as an additional language and those with learning difficulties had an impact on standards in Years 2 and 6 last year. The school's tracking systems identify that some pupils are reaching their targets, but the majority are not achieving what is expected of them. Progress towards raising standards is stronger where the school has placed most emphasis, for example, in speaking and listening, and where there has been less disruption caused by staffing issues. Standards in Years 5 and 6, however, continue to be of concern.

The school has been successful in implementing and developing systems to monitor progress and measure the standards pupils reach in English and mathematics. The impact teaching has on learning is also being carefully monitored. The quality of marking has improved and pupils in many classes are now given clear guidance about how to improve their work. The quality of teaching is now stronger than it was. Some of the developments, however, are extremely recent and, consequently, there has been very little impact on the progress made by pupils, which for the majority remains similar to that at the last inspection and is not good enough.

The school has been successful in improving the provision for ICT. Laptops have been purchased and an ICT suite developed. Pupils commented very positively about the improvements. The school has adopted the local authority's scheme of work and has redesigned the curriculum. It is currently developing opportunities for pupils to consolidate their ICT skills across the curriculum, but this is at a very early stage of development. The headteacher and another member of staff, who has recently left the school, had shared subject leadership for ICT. This area is currently being rigorously monitored by the headteacher.

The school receives adequate support from the local authority. The school and local authority are working in close partnership establishing a firm foundation on which to build further. They recognise, however, that there has been insufficient impact on raising standards or improving the progress made by pupils.

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

Yours sincerely



Jim Alexander
Additional Inspector