

29 November 2007

Miss J Wragg  
Headteacher  
Stirling Primary School  
Prospect Place  
Doncaster  
South Yorkshire  
DN1 3QP

Dear Miss Wragg

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 27 November 2007, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during my visit. Please also pass on my thanks to the pupils.

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:

- raise standards and accelerate achievement in English, mathematics and science
- improve levels of attendance
- improve the quality of teaching and learning so that it enables all pupils to achieve as well as they should.

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's provisional Key Stage 2 test results for 2007 show improvement on the previous year, particularly in mathematics and science. Although standards are still below average, this is better than the very low standards in 2006. Smaller gains were made in English, where standards are still exceptionally low. These results represent satisfactory achievement for the individual pupils concerned, particularly in mathematics and science. The results at Key Stage 1 rose in reading in 2007, but declined in writing and mathematics. The very high number of pupils leaving and joining the school during the year continues to be a significant issue and has an impact on teaching and test results. A third of the current Year 6 class, for example, has joined the school since September. Over half of the pupils who took the Key Stage 1 tests in 2007 joined the school during Year 2. Many of those joining the

school are new to the country and often speak little or no English. Pupils' levels of English acquisition also affect results. For example, in Year 6 last year, pupils were able to benefit from translations for the mathematics and science tests and gained higher results than in English, where this was not the case.

Pupils' progress is tracked regularly during the course of the year and the outcomes are analysed very thoroughly. As a result, the headteacher has a very detailed knowledge of how pupils are performing and a good understanding of the factors affecting this. Data indicate that the majority of pupils are currently making satisfactory progress in mathematics and English. However, the rate of progress continues to be too variable. Not all are yet making sufficient progress, especially in lower Key Stage 2. A wide range of actions is being taken to improve achievement. There has been a specific focus on writing, for example. All staff have received training, the 'Big Write' has been introduced, visits and visitors are being used to provide more interesting stimuli for pupils' writing, and pupils have targets which help them know how to improve. This is beginning to improve pupils' writing.

Although attendance for the last school year did not improve on the previous year and remained under 90%, figures for the current year show an increase. From the start of September to the end of the week before this inspection, attendance was 92.8%, as compared with 83.2% for the same period the previous year. Punctuality has also improved. Promoting good attendance has a high profile. In particular, the school is working with families of pupils from minority ethnic groups, where absence is highest. Some Eastern European groups with Traveller backgrounds, for example, still have attendance as low as 80%. Work is beginning to bear fruit. Although some children of Asian heritage are still taken on extended holidays, fewer requests are being made. Those that are made are more often tied in with school holidays.

Much action to improve teaching and learning is taking place, including training for teachers, the development of whole-school approaches and the tackling of specific weaknesses. In particular, data on pupils' progress are being used to make teachers more accountable for their performance. The appointment of two extra teachers, made possible through extra funding for schools in the 'hard to shift' category, has been used to organise Key Stage 2 classes into smaller groups for literacy and numeracy. The narrower range of abilities in the resulting teaching groups has promoted a sharper focus to the planning of lessons. The school's clear programme of regular and accurate monitoring has correctly identified some good teaching. Positive features in some lessons include detailed planning, practical tasks which engage pupils' interests and pupils being encouraged to reflect on the feedback that teachers give them on their work and the extent to which they are meeting their targets. However, the quality of teaching is still too variable and not all pupils are making enough progress in their learning. This is particularly the case in lower Key Stage 2. Robust action is being taken to tackle this situation and continues to be necessary. There are still some inconsistencies in teaching more generally, such as the extent to which teachers plan tasks to meet pupils' different needs and the quality of marking.

The school is benefiting from a good amount of input from the local authority on a range of relevant issues. While there is formal monitoring of the progress the school

is making, not all reports are evaluative enough. Some concentrate more on outlining the actions being taken rather than their impact on outcomes. This reduces their helpfulness to the school.

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

Yours sincerely

Joan McKenna  
Additional Inspector