

Nord Anglia Inspections
Anglia House
Carrs Road
Cheadle
Stockport SK8 2LA

T 08456 40 40 40
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk

Direct T 0161 491 4191
Direct F 0161 491 9677

13 February 2008

Mrs Elaine Armstrong
Headteacher
Hylton Castle Primary School
Cramlington Road
Sunderland
Tyne and Wear
SR5 3QL

Dear Mrs Armstrong

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 12 February 2008, 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 pupils and staff who gave up their time to meet 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 June 2007, the school was asked to: raise standards and improve the achievement of all pupils; improve the provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities; and improve teaching, matching tasks accurately to pupils' abilities and raising the level of challenge.

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

Standards are improving and are satisfactory overall. Results for the 2007 national tests show that standards achieved by pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities were good. The school's own rigorous monitoring information demonstrates that, in relation to their starting points most pupils are now making at least satisfactory and in some cases good progress. However, the school is aware of the need to ensure a consistent and sustained trend of improvement throughout the school in order to raise standards further.

Most pupils are making satisfactory and often good progress in lessons because of the improvements in teaching, learning and assessment since the inspection in June 2007. The gains pupils are making are accelerated by their good behaviour and

increasingly positive attitudes to learning. Pupils reported being more actively involved in lessons and in assessing their own progress; they are finding their work more challenging and enjoyable. Observations of lessons, scrutiny of the schools' monitoring records and examination of some pupils' books confirm these improvements. Nevertheless, the school rightly recognises that these improvements need to be embedded and there is work to do to ensure that feedback to pupils consistently tells them what they need to do to improve.

There has been an increased emphasis on learning support, as a result of a recent review of provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The identification of these pupils' needs is more rigorous and support is more carefully targeted. There is better collaboration between teachers and teaching assistants when planning work and assessing pupils' attainment. These factors are contributing to faster progress for these pupils.

Since the inspection in 2007, there have been several changes in staffing. The senior leadership team has been strengthened. The support and challenge received by the school from the local authority and the school improvement partner have been good, and the school has valued this guidance. Clearer roles and responsibilities for staff and governors have helped the school to focus on the right priorities. Consequently, staff have a clearer understanding of what is expected of them. Governors' understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses is also improving so that they are able to challenge the school over its performance. Sharper systems of monitoring are used to hold classroom teachers to account for the quality and outcomes of their work; these involve regular assessments of pupils' progress, feedback from lesson observations and staff performance reviews.

The impact of the school's sharper focus on targeting support for individual learning needs and improving classroom practice is reflected in better outcomes for pupils. The school is well set to carry on improving because of the determination of the headteacher and the developing skills and commitment of the senior management team and all of the staff.

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

Yours sincerely

Wendy Ripley
Her Majesty's Inspector