

Cambridge
Education
Demeter House
Station Road
Cambridge CB1 2RS

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

Direct T 01223 578500
Direct F 01223 578501
risp.inspections@camb-ed.com



28 January 2008

Mrs Joy Thompson, Headteacher
Blackwell Community Primary and Nursery School
Primrose Hill
Blackwell
Alfreton
Derbyshire
DE55 5JG

Dear Mrs Thompson

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 15 January 2008, 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 particular thanks to staff and those pupils who met with me and the governors for the time they gave. The school has undergone significant staffing changes, including three teachers leaving at the end of last term. A leadership team of three has replaced the traditional arrangement of the Headteacher and deputy Headteacher. A new Foundation Stage Unit was established at the beginning of this academic year, again headed up by a new member of staff.

This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website.

As a result of the inspection on 26 – 27 June 2007, the school was asked to raise standards, especially in writing, make more effective use of assessment information and to ensure all pupils are consistently challenged, better monitor and evaluate the impact of actions taken to bring about school improvement and improve pupils' behaviour. It has implemented its action plan well. Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time the school is making satisfactory progress overall in addressing the issues for improvement identified at the last inspection, including satisfactory progress in raising standards and good progress in improving pupils' behaviour.

The school rightly gave priority to improving pupils' behaviour. Supported by the local authority (LA) it appointed a teaching assistant specifically responsible for following through the school's behaviour policy. This has been extremely effective in reducing poor behaviour and in ensuring consistency of practice across the school. Pupils and their parents understand the system fully and endorse the approach. All of the actions taken have had a very positive impact on the climate at the school, which now feels like a happy place to be. Children themselves recognise that behaviour has

improved, including in the playground, where purposeful activities take place with the assistance of a play co-ordinator.

In the autumn term, the school implemented a new assessment and tracking system for monitoring pupils' progress. The senior management team work very effectively together to evaluate this and to regularly discuss their findings with the class teachers. This serves to ensure that information is used effectively to plan appropriately for class and individual needs. Staff are now more aware of where there are gaps in pupils' understanding and where consolidation or greater support is necessary. The school is making better use of targets. Expectations are high and pupils have the self belief that they can achieve. More effective use is made of self and peer assessment throughout the lessons. Staff continually check if pupils have understood and use this information to shape their teaching. The quality of teaching is consistently satisfactory and it is often good. New members of staff have brought enthusiasm to their roles and there is now an excellent team spirit.

Standards improved overall in last year's end of Key Stage 1 tests and are now broadly average. Spring and summer born pupils did not do as well as those born in the autumn. Standards also improved significantly overall in last year's end of Key Stage 2 tests, although there was a small dip in science results. Standards remained below the national average in all subjects, but were very close to the national average in English. Work in books and during lessons shows that pupils, including those in Year 6, are still mostly working below the national average. The school is doing everything it can to rectify the legacy of some past inconsistent teaching and learning and has identified the problems accurately. Well planned lessons, more regular homework, targeted additional support where necessary and booster sessions for Year 6 help to secure learning, prepare pupils for the forthcoming tests and help more pupils achieve the higher levels.

The governing body is working well to address the key issues presented to the school at the last inspection. Governors have improved their knowledge, brought in new expertise and given good support to the school. They have shared roles and responsibilities wisely and made some sound appointments for the school. Governors have an accurate view of the school because they now understand the data and are monitoring and challenging the school more effectively. The governors, as the staff, are determined to bring about change. They have demonstrated their commitment and have a strong vision for the school. Whilst the impact of all this is limited still in terms of raising standards, it has done much to bring about improving the school climate and giving a positive direction.

The school has received a good level of support from the LA. Its statement of action is clear, covers all of the areas required and confirms that it agrees with the school's priorities exactly. The measures taken have fitted very effectively with the school's own improvement plan, and this has both supported and challenged the school. The LA has provided some good quality professional development for staff and governors and initiated some useful work with parents.

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

Yours sincerely

Jane Melbourne
Her Majesty's Inspector, Education, Learning and Skills