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17 April 2008

Mrs C Winstanley
Lyme Community Primary School
Lyme Street
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Merseyside
WA12 9HD

Dear Mrs Winstanley

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 16 April 2008, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during my visit. Please also extend my thanks to the local authority (LA) adviser, the chair of governors, the staff and pupils with whom I met.

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 26 and 27 March 2007, the school was asked to improve standards and achievement in writing in Key Stage 2; raise achievement for the more able pupils throughout the school; and extend opportunities for learning outside the classroom to enrich pupils' experiences and help them find out more about other cultures. In addition, the school's procedures for safeguarding learners did not meet current government requirements.

Since the previous inspection the school has moved into new premises and the outdoor area is scheduled for completion in May 2008.

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 and in raising pupils' achievement.

Standards at Key Stage 2 have risen since the previous inspection. In the most recent statutory assessments the school exceeded its targets. The percentage of pupils reaching the expected level in English rose markedly from 60% in 2006 to 78% in 2007. Results for the more able pupils who gained the higher Level 5 improved from 10% to 26%. Results in writing improved from 33% to 83% at the expected level. Standards also rose in mathematics at the expected Level 4 and more modestly at Level 5. Results in science showed an improvement on the numbers gaining Level 4 but dipped at the higher level. In Key Stage 1 results

improved in reading with a significant rise in the number of pupils gaining the higher Level 3: results were maintained in writing but dipped at Level 3 in mathematics. These results show the school is attaining standards which are broadly in line with the national average. In 2006 the progress made by pupils during their time at the school was slower than that made by most pupils in similar schools nationally. By contrast, in 2007, progress made by pupils slightly exceeded the national average. The school's assessment information shows that pupils are on track to maintain these standards and improve at the higher levels.

Such improvement exemplifies the senior leadership team's commitment to drive forward the school improvement agenda. They have worked hard to respond to the last inspection report. To have done so alongside the challenge of overseeing the final stages of building and moving into the new school premises is a notable success. The new building is appreciated and respected by pupils and staff, and the atmosphere is calm, purposeful and orderly.

Through the comprehensive system for checking the rate of progress of pupils in English and mathematics, teachers quickly identify pupils at risk of underachieving or those who need more challenge. As a result, staff plan work based on accurate assessments enabling them to provide well matched and challenging activities to secure the progress of pupils. A whole-school focus to raise the attainment of pupils in writing has been introduced. This is beginning to provide pupils with more opportunities to write at length. The school has begun to look at ways for pupils to practise these skills in other subjects. Action taken to raise standards and achievement in writing includes the effective use of teaching assistants who support individuals and groups of pupils in developing their writing skills.

The school has reviewed its curriculum provision in order to meet the needs of the pupils and to offer the more able pupils opportunities for independent work. This has included an alteration in the school timetable; staff training in linking the different subjects together; and more effective planning for activities which will allow pupils to apply their skills. Although it is in the early stages of development, inspection evidence indicates that pupils are enjoying this new way of working. Pupils reported that there is a wider variety of teaching methods since the last inspection, including a greater use of interactive whiteboards and more time spent on independent work. Good use of questions posed by the teacher enables pupils to explain their thinking and make gains in their learning. In lessons observed the teacher explained the task clearly and no time was wasted as pupils quickly got down to work.

The school has achieved success in extending opportunities for learning outside the classroom. Pupils have enjoyed a residential trip to Boreatton Park and the school has plans to make this an annual event for the pupils in Year 6. The school has developed a musical partnership with the Hallé Orchestra which offers pupils an opportunity to visit the Bridgewater Hall, receive music teaching from an expert, and then perform a concert for members of the school and wider communities.

Curriculum provision also includes opportunities for pupils to extend their understanding of other cultures. Effective use is made of visits and visitors to enhance pupils' awareness of the world outside the classroom. Pupils were keen to explain how, through the theme of 'all around us', all classes learn about a different

country and share their learning through presentations. Pupils in Year 3 and Year 4 learn to speak French. The school has purchased new resources to support multicultural experiences, for example musical instruments. Through collective worship themes pupils celebrate the different aspects of a multicultural society. All these activities are enriching pupils' experiences and improving their knowledge and understanding of other cultures. However, some of these activities are still in their infancy and it is too early to evaluate fully the impact on pupils' cultural awareness.

The school has strengthened its procedures for the safeguarding of pupils and these now meet current requirements.

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

Yours sincerely

Eileen M Mulgrew
Her Majesty's Inspector