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24 April 2008

Mrs Sue Blair
Pennine Way Primary School
Silverdale Road
Harraby
Carlisle
Cumbria
CA1 3RQ

Dear Mrs Blair,

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 23rd April 2008, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during my visit. I am also grateful for the time given by the representatives of the governing body and local authority. 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 October 2007, the school was asked to:

- improve the rate of pupils' progress;
- raise standards, especially in Key Stage 1, and in writing across the school;
- improve teaching, especially the level of challenge in lessons;
- improve attendance.

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 and raising the pupils' achievement.

Led by the resolute and clear-sighted leadership of the headteacher, the school responded positively after the inspection in October. The issues raised in the report have been well analysed. Good new systems, such as those that track pupils' progress, have been introduced and staff have been receptive to any suggestions for improvement. Regular monitoring of the school's work has been rigorous and developmental, as well as supportive. Good involvement by the governing body is playing a valuable role in this. The local authority has provided very good support for the school, working with the headteacher and governors to create a clear plan for improvement and providing professional support.

The school has recently appointed a deputy headteacher with the enthusiasm and skills to help the school develop. The new leader of Key Stage 1 brings strong leadership skills, evident in her successful development of the Foundation Stage. All staff share a combined will to improve and have been eager to take advantage of any new training available.

Progress in Key Stage 1 is satisfactory. This is an improvement, helped in particular by the school's strong focus on writing and also by better teaching. Evidence from the school's data and pupils' work suggests that standards in the 2008 Year 2 national assessments are likely to be broadly average in reading, writing and mathematics. However, this year group has only a small percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, which is unusual for the school. In addition, only a few pupils are likely to achieve the higher levels, especially in writing and mathematics. Progress in Key Stage 2 is also satisfactory. Standards by the end of Year 6 are likely to be below average this year but this year group has a legacy of underachievement and has a very high percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.


Standards in writing show clear signs of improvement in recent months. Pupils' books and school data show that pupils have become more confident and competent as a result of the school's concerted efforts. For example, some Year 2 pupils who could barely write a sentence six months ago are now stringing them together successfully. New strategies adopted by teachers have brought a fresh approach to learning and helped pupils to improve their spelling and vocabulary, which the school knows are comparative weaknesses. More enrichment in the curriculum is broadening pupils' vocabulary and a priority is to develop this further. Well focused target-setting and a greater awareness by teachers of pupils' ability levels are helping pupils to know their own capabilities and be clearer about what they need to improve. The school is proud of the improvements but recognises that there is still some way to go.

The quality of teaching is satisfactory with increasingly good practice. Strengths include a purposeful atmosphere in lessons, very good pupil management, classroom organisation, lesson planning, questioning techniques, use of resources and deployment of teaching assistants. Teachers are becoming better at providing work that meets the needs of all ability groups but not all are consistently good enough yet. Sometimes the level of challenge is too ambitious. Although the pace of learning is often brisk, it is still only moderate in some lessons and, at times, staff do not monitor groups of pupils to ensure they are working quickly enough.

The school has strengthened its procedures for promoting attendance, including a revitalised reward system. Underlying reasons for absences or patterns of absence are closely analysed. This has enabled the school to discover, for example, that illness was a more important factor than previously realised and so has asked the school nurse to investigate. Letters are sent to families when attendance rates drop too low and are followed up with visits by the education welfare officer. The school does not shy away from referring persistent offenders to attendance panels. It has succeeded in eliminating most of the unauthorised attendance but its efforts have not yet resulted in a discernible improvement in attendance overall.

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

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Andrew Scott." The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above a horizontal line.

Andrew Scott
Additional Inspector