

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

T 08456 40 40 40  
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk  
[www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

Direct T 0161 491 8400  
Direct F 0161 491 4409



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Mrs Pauline Wood  
Headteacher  
Grange Park Primary School  
Swan Street  
Sunderland  
Tyne and Wear  
SR5 1EA

Dear Mrs Wood

Ofsted monitoring of Notice to Improve schools

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 18 June 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, staff and governors for speaking with me during the day.

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 November 2007, the school was asked to:

- Strengthen leadership by identifying the roles and responsibilities of middle managers and ensuring they have the experience and training to carry out their tasks, and ensure that the governing body carries out its responsibilities.
- Take steps to monitor and improve the provision made for pupils with very complex needs.
- Take immediate action to ensure that issues to do with health and safety are eradicated and that potential risks are assessed.
- Ensure all pupils receive their full entitlement to the curriculum.
- Improve teaching and learning.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time the school is making satisfactory progress overall in addressing the areas for improvement and in raising pupils' achievement.

The headteacher, staff and governors are tackling all areas for improvement robustly and with a keen sense of determination. The school's self evaluation is accurate. School improvement planning is well targeted and provides an effective vehicle for

moving the school forward. Teamwork is strong and there is an evident commitment amongst the staff to be successful. The local authority (LA) has acted appropriately and with urgency in helping the school to address areas for improvement identified in the inspection report. Support and intervention have been proportionate and has helped the school to develop the capacity to sustain further improvement.

The roles and responsibilities of those in middle leadership positions have been clarified within the context of the newly created curriculum teams. Their part in delivering improved teaching and learning, together with a sharpened accountability to senior staff for raising standards, is well defined. In addition, an intensive and well coordinated professional development programme is helping to equip them with the skills and knowledge needed to effectively undertake their responsibilities.

Important changes have been made to the way the governing body monitors and evaluates the school's performance. Routine visits by link governors, together with monthly headteacher reports, have increased their knowledge of the school's work. A comprehensive training programme and additional governor appointments have improved their collective ability to hold the school to account. A combination of these factors has resulted in a greater degree of challenge to the headteacher and staff and has heightened governors' expectations of what can be achieved.

The quality of monitoring and provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, (LDD) including those with complex needs, has been improved. The monitoring of pupils' progress is frequent and rigorous; it is checked in precise detail through efficient use of performance data. Assessment records demonstrate that in most cases appropriate rates of progress are being made by pupils and where this does not occur targeted intervention programmes are instigated and are proving to be successful. Evaluating the effectiveness of provision for these pupils has been further strengthened through the involvement of a wider group of professionals to ensure that all aspects of a child's development are considered.

The school's response to inspection findings has been swift and well considered. Good progress has been made in tackling health and safety matters and ensuring efficient risk assessment. These issues are dealt with rigorously and monitoring has ensured there is full compliance by all staff to relevant procedures. The LA's health and safety audit of April 2008 confirms that all issues have been successfully addressed.

Pupils' entitlement to the full curriculum has been improved through the school's imaginative restructuring of the timetable with enhanced access to the foundation subjects. These measures are aligned to a general reduction in the amount of pupil withdrawal from lessons with a higher priority given to in-class support. Where withdrawal does occur, in the majority of cases, activities have become an extension of classroom based tasks.

On the basis of observational evidence, the school's own evaluation of teaching and learning is accurate. In most lessons seen teaching and learning was good although in a minority they were satisfactory. Good teaching and learning was characterised

by effective questioning skills which engaged pupils and stimulated their thinking. Lessons had a clear structure: teachers took care to ensure they provided a good context for learning through careful explanation and effective use of resources, most notably the use of the interactive whiteboards. Tasks were well differentiated and teaching assistants deployed effectively to support groups of learners. This ensured that learning progressed at a good pace with pupils staying on-task and most making good progress. On the few occasions where this combination of factors was not evident, the pace of learning slowed and progress became less marked mainly because interruptions to lessons were too frequent and some pupils were unclear about the purpose of activities.

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

Yours sincerely

Tom Grieveson HMI  
Her Majesty's Inspector