

9 May 2008

Mrs S Stacey
Headteacher
Stockton Wood Community Primary School
23 All Saints Road
Speke
Liverpool
L24 3TF

Dear Mrs Stacey

Ofsted monitoring of schools with a Notice to Improve

Thank you for the help you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 8 May 2008, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information you provided before and during my visit. I am also grateful to the chair of governors and the local authority (LA) for assistance with this visit.

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:

- improve the quality of teaching and learning so that it is consistently good in Key Stage 2 and raises pupils' achievement in English, mathematics and science
- provide better opportunities for pupils to practice and develop literacy skills, especially writing, across the curriculum
- improve monitoring and evaluation of the impact of individual education plans for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and intervention strategies for pupils who are underachieving
- raise levels of 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.

The school has responded with urgency to the issues identified at its previous inspection. The headteacher, supported well by senior staff and governors, has shown great determination in leading the school through a period of much change and disruption and has generated a strong momentum for improvement to get the school back on track. The leadership team has been restructured, permanent appointments have been made and new roles have been developed with training and support. As a result, teamwork is strong, morale is improving and staff are forward thinking and reflective. Efforts have been clearly focused on raising achievement and

improving the quality of teaching. This means that the legacy of underachievement is being tackled more decisively and senior leaders have a sharper focus of how well the school is performing. In addition, the school has taken every opportunity to benefit from the effective support of the LA in bringing about recent improvements.

The school is a harmonious community. Pupils are polite, always try their best and are keen to succeed. They enjoy school a great deal, which is demonstrated by their positive attitudes to their learning and by their enthusiasm for the wide range of opportunities that the school provides. Even when activities are less engaging, pupils work hard and concentrate well in lessons.

Pupils' current work, together with the school's own data, shows that there are signs of better progress on the part of some pupils and that standards are beginning to rise, particularly in reading and mathematics. However, pupils' progress in writing, particularly that of boys, is less rapid because many of the school's new initiatives to accelerate pupils' progress have not had sufficient time to make a significant difference to their achievement. Nevertheless, data for 2008 indicates that increasing numbers of Year 6 pupils are on track to achieve their targets and that their achievement overall is improving when compared with their prior attainment. This is because improved teaching and learning is increasing the progress pupils make in lessons. Teachers are more confident in pinpointing in their planning what pupils will learn and in conveying that message clearly at the beginning of lessons. There is clear agreement on the progress pupils should make and improvements to tracking systems are enabling staff to identify more clearly pupils who are underachieving. Furthermore, the use of success criteria is improving pupils' understanding. There are regular discussions of how well pupils are achieving and staff are increasingly aware of what constitutes effective learning.

As a consequence, support and intervention are planned more appropriately, staff have a greater awareness of the needs of individual learners and are increasingly confident in judging what pupils need to learn next.

Procedures for checking on the quality of teaching are much sharper and are having a stronger impact on improving learning. Lesson observations by senior staff routinely focus on the progress made by pupils and staff are provided with clear targets to improve their practice.

In the best lessons, new learning consistently builds well on pupils' prior knowledge, the aims of the lessons are clear and teaching assistants provide good quality support. Teachers have good subject knowledge and are skilled in developing pupils' thinking through effective questioning that keeps pupils on their toes. Most teachers are developing an improved understanding of pupils' progress and this is strengthening their ability to plan more relevant activities, although this is not consistent in all classes. Where teaching is less strong, opportunities for pupils to make decisions for themselves about how they learn or to think of different ways to tackle their work are not always encouraged. Pupils' work is sometimes over directed. Information shared with pupils about their progress is improving. There are some good examples where pupils are given clear guidance on how to improve their work and reach the next level.

The school has introduced many new initiatives to provide better opportunities for pupils to develop their literacy skills across the curriculum and has fostered a whole-school approach. Staff training has proved effective. Writing time in lessons has been extended. As a result, in classrooms writing has a higher visual profile than at the time of the previous inspection and staff are increasingly aware of the need to encourage pupils further to write in areas of the curriculum other than English. Pupils are well supported in their work and are more actively engaged in their learning. For example, they are very enthusiastic about choosing a weekly 'wow word' to use in their story writing.

The monitoring and evaluation of the impact of individual education plans for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities has improved. Individual targets for pupils have a sharper focus on their progress and achievement. There are some good examples of how the targets have been achieved and these are supported well with appropriate evidence in class work and intervention books. The school is acting far more decisively in its ability to judge the success of its extra support for pupils who fall behind in their work. For example, pupils' achievements are now carefully tracked, there are weekly meetings to discuss how well pupils are progressing, and observations of small groups of pupils at work are now commonplace.

Attendance is improving, although it is still below average. The school continues to seek ways of encouraging and promoting good attendance through the work of the family mentor and through regular telephone contact with parents. In addition, the school has reviewed its attendance policy and tries hard to increase parents' awareness of the significance of pupils' absence. For example, 90% attendance means 20 missed days.

The school is well placed to improve further. The whole-school commitment to improvement and the positive way the school acts upon advice has strengthened its capacity to improve.

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

Yours sincerely

Steve Isherwood
Her Majesty's Inspector