

12 June 2008

Miss Fairhurst
Headteacher
Knowsley Village School
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L34 0ER

Dear Miss Fairhurst

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 11 June 2008, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during my visit. Please extend my thanks to governors, pupils and staff for their helpful contributions to the inspection.

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 13 and 14 November 2007, the school was asked to:

- improve rates of pupils' progress so that they are at least satisfactory
- improve the quality of teaching so that all lessons are consistently good or better
- provide opportunities across the curriculum to develop basic skills in English and mathematics
- ensure that academic guidance makes clear the next steps of learning
- improve the quality of strategic leadership.

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 in raising pupils' achievement.

The headteacher retired in March 2008 and the local authority has taken effective steps to ensure that the drive for improvement continues and progresses. The senior leadership team has been strengthened with the appointment of an executive headteacher from a neighbouring outstanding school. Under her confident and incisive leadership, staff are working successfully together to raise pupils' achievement. They are enthusiastically embracing changes and taking robust action to tackle areas requiring improvement.

The school has made satisfactory progress in improving the rates of pupils' progress. Children are making at least satisfactory and often better progress across the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1. In 2007 very few pupils attained the higher levels in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 2. The school has successfully raised attainment and performance in the 2008 Year 2 national assessments is in line with or above the 2007 national average in all subjects and at all levels. The 2008 Year 6 standardised test results are not yet available but current standards of work indicate that pupils' rates of progress across Key Stage 2 are at least satisfactory. The school is on track to achieve the targets set for Level 4 attainment in English and mathematics. Attainment at the higher Level 5 is predicted to be lower than expected based on the prior attainment of pupils but the current high standards in Year 5 indicate considerable improvement for 2009.

The improved rates of pupils' progress have been brought about by the whole-school focus on improving the quality of provision to better meet the needs of learners. School leaders have put comprehensive tracking systems in place to track pupils' progress and identify those who are underachieving. Teachers are making good use of the information to provide vulnerable and slow moving pupils with effective support. They recognise that there is further work to be done to improve rates of progress for the more able pupils. Work in this area is progressing well with the development of specific provision for the more able pupils in Year 4 and action plans for able pupils across the school.

Teachers have made good progress in tackling the weaker aspects of teaching identified in the last inspection. Teaching was sampled across the school and observations confirmed the local authority evaluation and observations by the newly appointed executive headteacher in which 63% of lessons were judged to be good or better. No inadequate teaching and much good practice was observed. The last inspection reported that work planned for pupils was not accurately matched to their ability and there was an over-reliance on worksheets, particularly in foundation subjects. Teachers have developed a more lively and varied approach to teaching with a rigorous focus on targets at pupil level. In the best lessons, good links are made to pupils' prior learning and pupils are given a range of activities well matched to their learning needs and interests.

Progress in ensuring that academic guidance makes clear the next steps of learning is satisfactory. Pupils generally have a good understanding of their personal learning targets and know what they need to do to achieve higher standards. A new marking scheme has recently been introduced although this is not yet used consistently. Where it is used well, it provides pupils with clear guidance on how to improve the quality of their written work.

The school has revised its approach to teaching foundation subjects and satisfactory progress has been made in providing opportunities across the curriculum to develop basic skills in English and mathematics. Teachers and pupils are thoroughly enjoying the newly adopted thematic approach and increased opportunities for collaborative and creative work. Although it is too early to judge the impact on pupils' knowledge and skills development across the curriculum, their enthusiasm for learning is

evident. Topics such as pirates and life as a child in Victorian times and wartime Britain have captured their imagination.

Good progress has been made in improving the quality of strategic leadership. The executive headteacher is providing clear direction and inspirational leadership to secure improvements. She is well supported by the senior leadership team who are energetically leading whole-school developments. All staff and governors have a good overview of strengths and weaknesses in the school and are effectively tackling weaker aspects of practice. Leaders have established comprehensive systems to track the progress of pupils and each teacher has a good understanding of pupils' progression rates in their class and targets for improvement. The headteacher has observed all teachers and provided clear feedback and targets to improve the quality of teaching and learning. Good opportunities, well matched to the needs of staff, are being provided for professional development. All staff and pupils are extremely positive about the changes taking place. Teachers are highly motivated and have readily taken responsibility for leading change in their own classrooms. Pupils are happy and confident learners, appreciative of the hard work their teachers put into making learning fun and interesting.

The local authority is providing good support to secure improvements and build capacity within the school.

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

Yours sincerely

Jean Kendall
Her Majesty's Inspector