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6 June 2008

Miss Claire Johnson
Headteacher
Carville Primary School
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Dear Miss Johnson

Ofsted monitoring of Notice to Improve schools

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 5 June 2008, for the time you gave to our telephone discussion and for the information which you provided before and during my visit. Please pass on my thanks to the staff, pupils and representatives of the governors and local authority (LA) for their help and co-operation. The school has undergone significant staffing changes since the previous inspection, including the appointment of an interim headteacher, seconded from the LA, and a new co-ordinator with responsibility for literacy and Key Stage 2. Four new governors have also been appointed.

As a result of the inspection in November 2007, the school was asked to:

- improve achievement by developing pupils' spoken and written English throughout the school, particularly by planning the curriculum better
- improve the Foundation Stage
- evaluate more rigorously the impact of provision on the pupils' performance and development
- increase parents' involvement in the life of the school
- improve pupils' 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 in raising the pupils' achievement.

High priority has been given to addressing all key issues identified in the previous inspection. Most notably, robust and systematic procedures have been put in place for tracking the progress made by pupils and for identifying those who are underachieving, particularly in writing, speaking and listening. The introduction of strategies such as talk partners, dedicated opportunities for discussion on a regular basis, and increased opportunities for writing has enabled pupils to make satisfactory

progress in these areas. The school is taking appropriate steps to extend writing opportunities into other areas of the curriculum. The introduction of systems to gather more accurate assessment information and the setting of curricular targets is helping teachers to plan more effectively to meet the needs of individual pupils. Appropriate arrangements are in place to set pupils challenging targets and monitor their progress more rigorously. Pupils have responded positively to teachers sharing information about what they are to learn and what they need to do to achieve. The introduction of new marking strategies in all classes is having a positive effect on pupils' learning. Pupils are able to understand more clearly how they can improve their work and in particular, their writing. Work in books and lessons shows that although most pupils are making satisfactory progress, standards are below the national average. The presentation of work, handwriting and spelling is often poor. Lessons do not always provide enough exciting opportunities for learning. The use of information and communications technology (ICT) does not always include enough opportunities for the practical involvement of pupils, which would enhance learning. The school is doing everything it can to rectify the legacy of some past inconsistent teaching and learning and has identified the problems accurately.

Progress on improving the Foundation Stage provision is satisfactory. There is now an appropriate focus on the six areas of learning. Planning and assessment have improved: there is a greater emphasis on early writing and opportunities for speaking, listening and role play. Improved use of the outdoor classroom and re-organisation of the indoor classroom allows for increased child initiated learning. The quality of provision has improved and supports children in their learning. However, expectations are not always well matched to the individual needs and abilities of pupils.

The school has made good progress in monitoring and evaluating the impact of provision on the academic and personal development of pupils. The interim headteacher, with support from the governors and LA, has greatly improved the systems to monitor and evaluate the progress of pupils. There is now a clear vision and direction for the school and staff are keen to engage positively in improving outcomes for pupils. The strategies to improve pupil progress are well thought out and used consistently by all staff, as shown in the school's monitoring records. The pace of change has been rapid, but the impact on pupils' progress has yet to be fully demonstrated. The governing body is working effectively to address the key issues presented to the school at the last inspection. Governors have improved their knowledge, brought in new expertise and now provide good support and challenge to the school.

Parents are now more closely involved in the work of the school and good progress has been made in this area. There has been a very positive response to a variety of new initiatives introduced: for example, sharing success and areas for improvement with their children in the 'booklook' sessions. Parents who have engaged in this have indicated that they are now more aware of how to help their children learn. Parents have been made welcome and a large number have taken the opportunity to help in the classroom or assist with school visits. There are good opportunities to become involved in fun activities, such as a 'Pizza party' or 'Magic Garden party' in the Foundation Stage. Parents are now beginning to be involved in decision making, for example, in choosing a new school uniform.

The school has introduced a wide variety of effective strategies to improve attendance and has taken the firm step of not authorising any holidays during term time. Attendance is being monitored on a weekly basis and rewards are given for improved attendance. The school is challenging the most persistent non-attenders, including those in the Foundation Stage. Consequently, attendance has improved to just below the national average despite a chicken-pox outbreak which resulted in many absences over a period of a month. Although progress in improving attendance has been good, further improvement is required to enable attendance to reach the national average.

The school has received a good level of support from the LA despite a lack of clarity in its statement of action about how progress will be specifically measured and evaluated. The LA has provided some good quality professional development for staff and governors.

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

Yours sincerely

Christine Inkster HMI
Her Majesty's Inspector