

Tribal Group
1-4 Portland
Square
Bristol
BS2 8RR
T 0845 123 6001
F 0845 123 6002

T 08456 40 40 40
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk



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Mrs C Jobling
The Headteacher
Whitgreave Primary School
The Avenue
Featherstone
Staffordshire
WV10 7AS

Dear Ms Jobling

Ofsted monitoring of schools with a Notice to Improve

Thank you for the help which you and your staff and governors gave when I inspected your school on 21 May 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 and to the local authority (LA) for their cooperation during my 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 on 26 and 27 September 2007, the school was asked to:

- ensure that teachers use assessment information more effectively to plan activities that enable pupils in Years 1 and 2 to do the best they can
- provide better opportunities for pupils to develop their writing skills across the curriculum
- eliminate inconsistencies in teaching so that all pupils achieve as well as they can.

Evidence was gathered from discussions with staff, pupils and the chair of governors, analysis of pupils' work and school documentation, as well as observations of teaching and learning. Having considered all the evidence, I am of the opinion that the school is making satisfactory progress in addressing the issues for improvement and in raising the pupils' achievement.

There have been changes in staff since the last inspection, and there are more to come before the end of the year. These changes, combined with building work, have presented you with considerable challenges in your new role as headteacher. You have responded to these challenges very well and have kept school improvement at the heart of the school's agenda.

The school's priority on assessment is beginning to bear fruit. Teachers are more competent in using assessment information to set work that is a good match for most pupils' abilities. However, it is not used well enough to provide sufficient challenge for more able pupils. Furthermore, not enough is expected of these pupils in terms of the amount of work that should be completed in lesson time. This leads to underachievement, particularly for the more able boys, who do not work as hard as they should. Marking is improving. There are some examples of excellent marking in Year 5, where the pupils are regularly provided with an insightful critique of their work and the impact is plain to see in pupils' rapid achievement.

The pupils are involved in assessing their own work and, in the main, this is working well. The Year 5 and 6 pupils I spoke to were enthusiastic about assessing their own work and were crystal clear about what they have to learn next. They knew the success criteria and could assess their work critically in a range of subjects. However, some other pupils, particularly those who find learning difficult, were not as sure about how they could improve because the criteria were too complex for them to understand.

The school has been successful in providing a wider range of purposeful opportunities for writing across the curriculum. Most pupils enjoy writing in different styles and understand how the purpose of the writing must suit its intended audience. Key to this has been the emphasis on drama which has really inspired, even the more reluctant boys, to want to write. Evidence from pupils' books shows that presentation is improving. Although handwriting is neater, it is not joined early enough which impedes the fluency of their writing. Some work is let down by weak spelling and punctuation because these have not been taught effectively enough.

All teachers have created interesting learning environments and have warm and constructive relationships with their pupils. The pupils feel valued and are attentive and well behaved. Although teaching is improving, there are still inconsistencies in the quality of teaching which have a direct impact on pupils' achievement. Progress is rapid in the Foundation Stage and the last two years of Key Stage 2, but is slower in other year groups. One area of particular weakness is the teaching of phonics which has not been taught systematically enough. Consequently, there is a legacy of hesitant reading and poor spelling amongst some of the pupils.

As a result of the inconsistencies in teaching, standards in English and mathematics have not risen in line with the school's targets and, though improving, are still lower than average. In the 2007 Key Stage 2 national tests, standards were well below average in English and below average in mathematics. The 2007 Key Stage 1 results showed some improvement on the previous year in reading and writing, but not in mathematics. Achievement is now improving, but there is still clearly a way to go before all pupils are achieving as well as they should. In particular, the achievement of more capable pupils and pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is the most important issue for the school to tackle.

The school has received good support from the local authority. The local authority's determination to monitor the school's development and to provide it with appropriate support has been crucial in halting the school's decline. The core group meetings and

advisory support have enabled the school to set out its priorities and tackle issues with vigour. A School Improvement Partner has been appointed and has made one visit. This familiarisation visit has helped the school to confirm its priorities for the immediate future.

You have an excellent understanding of what the school needs to do and have the capacity and determination to do so and have made discernible improvements in the short time you have been in post. You are tackling issues rigorously and have high aspirations for your school. The chair of governors is highly supportive and has a good understanding of the school's needs. The school's evaluation of its provision informs action planning very well.

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

Yours sincerely

Mary E Hamby
Her Majesty's Inspector