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26 June 2008

Mrs R Lee
The Headteacher
Sneyd Green Primary School
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Dear Mrs Lee

Ofsted Monitoring of Grade 3 Schools

Thank you for the help which you and your staff, chair of governors and pupils gave when I inspected your school on 20 June 2008, for the time you gave to our phone discussion, and for the information which you provided before and 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 24 and 25 May 2007 the school was asked to:

- develop an interesting and imaginative curriculum that engages the interest of pupils and ensures they study in sufficient depth all subjects of the National Curriculum
- eliminate inconsistencies in the quality of teaching and raise teachers' expectations of what pupils are able to do
- ensure monitoring and evaluation procedures are much sharper in identifying a more accurate picture of what is happening in the school
- maximise outdoor learning opportunities for children in the Foundation Stage, and ensure there is an appropriate balance between adult-led and child-initiated activities.

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.

Each key issue is addressed in detail below.

- Develop an interesting and imaginative curriculum that engages the interest of pupils and ensures they study in sufficient depth all subjects of the National Curriculum.

The school has taken prompt and effective action to address weaknesses in the curriculum. The headteacher has led a thorough review of curricular provision and has ensured all subjects are allocated sufficient time. She has also ensured that subject leaders have provided their colleagues with well focused guidance about the knowledge and skills to be taught in their subjects. Schemes of work are now being implemented more rigorously so that individual lessons build more securely on pupils' previous learning. Scientific problem solving has been given more emphasis, pupils benefit from increased opportunities to use information and communication technology (ICT), and a range of interesting work helps pupils to make better progress in history and geography. As a result, standards are rising. The curriculum has been enriched by many more visits and visitors. These are very popular with pupils and help to bring learning alive. For example, pupils talk enthusiastically about their visit to a Victorian classroom, their role play as Victorians, the insights they gained from museum staff who visited the school, and their enjoyment in planning and performing a Victorian Christmas concert. Discussions with pupils clearly show they now find the curriculum more interesting and that they enjoy learning across a wide range of subjects. Year 6 pupils no longer believe that they spend too much time practising for statutory tests. Improvements in pupils' attitudes to school have helped to increase attendance and led to fewer incidents of poor behaviour.

- Eliminate inconsistencies in the quality of teaching and raise teachers' expectations of what pupils are able to do.

Improvements have been made to the quality of teaching so that it is more consistently effective than at the time of the last inspection. Teachers' planning shows that teachers now have a clearer view of what pupils are expected to learn, and their marking has improved so that pupils now benefit from more helpful feedback. Well judged training has helped staff to improve aspects of their work, including their expertise in teaching writing, scientific enquiry and ICT skills. As a result, pupils' progress is beginning to accelerate. Nevertheless, while variations in the teaching have been reduced, they have yet to be eliminated and still restrict the achievement of some pupils. This is particularly evident in Key Stage 2, where some pupils still make spasmodic progress due to weaknesses in teaching in a minority of classes. In these classes, teachers' expectations are not always high enough, especially for the most capable pupils. In addition, the pace of learning is often too pedestrian and questions are not always used well enough to probe and extend pupils' understanding.

- Ensure monitoring and evaluation procedures are much sharper in identifying a more accurate picture of what is happening in the school.

The school now has a more accurate view of its performance. The monitoring and evaluation roles of subject leaders have improved and leaders now use a range of strategies to develop a sound overview of provision. The headteacher has carefully monitored the implementation of improved planning procedures and provided staff with pertinent feedback to ensure that all subjects are given sufficient attention. She has also carried out extensive discussions with pupils to check that curriculum developments have had a beneficial impact on their attitudes and learning. This work has helped to embed improvements in the quality of education provided for the pupils. Nevertheless, there is still scope to increase the rigour of the school's monitoring and evaluation procedures in order to accelerate pupils' progress further. A good deal of useful information is collected through monitoring, including regular lesson observations by the headteacher and deputy headteacher. However, the best use is not always made of this information to identify and address areas for improvement with sufficient precision. Feedback to teachers gives appropriate recognition of their successes but often misses opportunities to provide them with guidance about how to improve further. When data shows that pupils in some classes are making slower than expected progress, the school is not always sufficiently tenacious in identifying and addressing the precise weaknesses in teaching that are the causes. These factors mean that inconsistencies in the teaching have not been fully rectified.

- Maximise outdoor learning opportunities for children in the Foundation Stage, and ensure there is an appropriate balance between adult-led and child-initiated activities.

The school has significantly increased the outdoor learning opportunities for children in the Foundation Stage, and these are having a beneficial impact on their education. The Foundation Stage staff have visited schools where provision is particularly effective, and this has helped to inform their practice at Sneyd Green. Children are now given more opportunities to make decisions and to initiate their own learning. In the lesson observed during the monitoring visit, children were engaged in a wide range of worthwhile outside learning opportunities. On occasions, however, adults missed opportunities to make well judged interventions to help Nursery children to make the best use of the opportunities provided.

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

Yours sincerely

David Westall
Additional Inspector