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06 November 2008

Mr M Jackson
Headteacher
Oakwood Avenue Community Primary School
Oakwood Avenue
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Cheshire
WA1 3SZ

Dear Mr Jackson

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 5 November 2008, for the time you gave to our phone discussions 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 12 and 13 March 2008, the school was asked to:

- improve the leadership and management of the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1
- improve standards in English, mathematics and science
- ensure teaching and learning are at least of good quality
- improve assessment and use it to identify and plan the next steps in children's learning and to better evaluate their progress
- make stronger links between school development planning, children's progress and accountability of staff.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time the school is making good progress in addressing the issues for improvement and in raising the pupils' achievement.

Staffing remains stable and some leadership roles have been restructured in response to issues raised at the time of the last inspection. There are currently two newly-qualified teachers covering periods of maternity leave. The deputy headteacher has taken on responsibility for Key Stage 1 leadership and is supported by a mentor headteacher from a successful local school. This is proving effective in ensuring that teachers' expectations, accountability and pupils' achievement in Key

Stage 1 are improving. It has also enabled the Foundation Stage leader to focus on provision and progress across the Nursery and both Reception classes. The Foundation Stage leader is developing in confidence and skill as a result of training and the restructuring of her role and responsibilities. Planning in the Foundation Stage has improved so that teaching is more clearly linked to what children already know and what they need to do to make progress. Opportunities for independent learning through child-initiated activities are increasingly well planned both indoors and out.

Key Stage 1 assessments in 2008 indicate that the attainment of pupils in Year 2 has improved considerably on the previous year, especially in mathematics. Although results overall, and especially in reading and writing, remain below the national average, the gap has narrowed from significantly below average in 2007. Variations exist in the attainment of groups of pupils: overall, girls made less progress than boys, and pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieved less well than the national average for that group. In addition, the school is aware that the proportion of seven year olds reaching the higher Level 3 in reading, writing and mathematics is still not good enough. However, more recent checks on pupils' work show that improvements are being made as a result of teachers' higher expectations and strategies implemented by the school with guidance from local authority (LA) consultants and advisers. These strategies include 'booster' group sessions for some pupils and the introduction of writing portfolios to develop teachers' skills in assessing pupils' work and providing them with clear guidance on how to improve it. Prompt action has been taken by senior leaders to review the school's provision for reading, including the improvement of guided reading resources and appropriate progression routes for pupils.

Test results for Key Stage 2 pupils in 2008 were generally unreliable due to problems with national marking systems. However, the school has checked and agreed results for 11 year olds who left the school in July. The proportion of pupils achieving at expected levels has improved since 2007, most significantly in English where the school's original target for this was exceeded by over 10%. Standards are now broadly in line with national averages in English and mathematics, and just below in science, when taking into account the results achieved by pupils who attend the school's enhanced provision. It is still the case that fewer pupils than nationally or locally are achieving the higher levels in English, mathematics and science. However, the school's tracking data from recent assessments show that more pupils are now likely to reach higher targets at the end of each key stage than in previous years. This is due to a number of factors: a rigorous focus on improving standards across the school; teachers' raised expectations of what pupils are capable of achieving; and the impact of whole-school developments in raising the quality of teaching and learning. Teamwork is strong and morale is high, as staff have responded positively to the challenges they face.

The monitoring of teaching and learning by senior leaders and LA advisers provides evidence of an improving profile across the school which was also apparent in the sampling of lessons during this visit. All staff have been involved in developing the

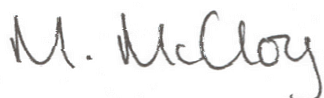
school's new learning and teaching policy. This is bringing about greater consistency in the quality of lesson planning and marking, and reducing variation in the use of assessment to inform planning. Positive relationships and the pupils' good attitudes to learning are evident throughout the school. Many teachers make good use of interactive whiteboard technology to enhance their lessons and enthuse pupils with resources which promote their learning. The curriculum provides meaningful links between subjects whilst also promoting pupils' thinking skills. Teachers speak with enthusiasm about the benefits of the recently introduced programme of paired lesson observations. These have enabled staff to look at teaching and learning across the school, engage in professional discussions with their colleagues, and share good practice.

The school's systems for tracking pupils' progress enable the leadership team to check on the impact of teaching on standards. Teachers are more accountable for the progress made by individual pupils. Their planning and assessment records form the basis of discussions with the headteacher and deputy headteacher, who provide an appropriate balance of challenge, guidance and support. The headteacher's evaluation of progress since the last inspection is recognised by the LA as a model of good practice and provides a useful starting point for a planned update of the school's self-evaluation document. Staff are aware of the school's improvement plans and of their contribution to these. The school improvement plan has recently been reviewed: the leadership team is aware of the need to sharpen up their use of success criteria in action planning. For example, the links between monitoring activities and evaluation of the impact of the school's actions on outcomes for pupils are not sufficiently clear.

The LA had acknowledged a declining trend in the school's performance prior to the March 2008 inspection and recommended the headteacher's return from a planned secondment. Although the weaknesses in the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 had not been identified before the inspection, prompt action was taken to challenge and support the school to make improvements in each of the identified key areas. Well-planned training and guidance are being provided by LA consultants and advisers to support the leadership team in bringing about the necessary improvements.

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

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "M. McCloy".

Marguerite McCloy
Her Majesty's Inspector