

CfBT Inspection Services  
Suite 22  
West Lancs Investment Centre  
Maple View  
Skelmersdale  
WN8 9TG

T 08456 40 40 40  
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk  
[www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

Direct T 01695 566932  
Direct F 01695 729320  
[hcarnall@cfbt.com](mailto:hcarnall@cfbt.com)



1 December 2008

Mrs Jane Tomlinson  
Headteacher  
Underwood West Primary School  
Newcastle Street  
Crewe  
Cheshire  
CW1 3LF

Dear Mrs Tomlinson

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 28 November 2008, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during my visit. Please also extend my thanks to the pupils, your chair of governors and the representative of the local authority (LA) with whom I met.

This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website.

As a result of the inspection on 23 April 2008, the school was asked to raise standards in English, mathematics and science; ensure that teachers make better use of assessment information to plan work to meet the needs and interests of all pupils; ensure that the curriculum at Key Stage 1 meets the needs of all pupils, particularly those in Year 1; and ensure that leaders at all levels use data accurately to promote higher standards and progress.

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 most recent statutory assessments and tests show a dip in standards at both key stages but generally reflect the inspection findings of April this year. The legacy of significant underachievement is still evident. However, the strategies to raise standards and improve achievement noted in the April inspection, together with additional strategies and initiatives implemented since that time, are starting to have a positive impact. The school's detailed data for checking pupils' progress shows that while standards remain low across the school, approximately half the pupils have made notable gains in English and mathematics. This improvement is borne out in pupils' work and the quality of learning seen in the 13 lessons sampled. Currently, there is more evidence available of progress in English and mathematics than in science because the school has appropriately prioritised these two areas.

Improvement in science is being centred on ensuring a stronger focus on developing investigative skills and enabling pupils to practise literacy and numeracy skills in the context of investigations and recording.

Pupils have a better understanding of written language and this is particularly evident in improvements to their writing. Work shows that pupils' knowledge of how different types of writing, such as reports, instructions and stories, are structured is becoming much more secure. Pupils are writing more regularly at length and as a structured activity in more subjects. A distinctive feature of all the writing lessons sampled was pupils' engagement in their work because of teachers' success in providing tasks that really captured pupils' interest, thereby motivating them to write. Examples included Year 5 pupils' role play press conference notes and reports with members of the 'Strictly Come Dancing' team, Year 3 pupils' factual books on insects, and Year 1 pupils' sandwich-making instructions – each one composed following the preceding practical step. In discussion, many pupils commented how much more they enjoyed literacy lessons; the presentation of pupils' work reflects their increasing pride and enjoyment.

Despite some progress being made in mathematics, there remain large gaps in pupils' mathematical understanding. Pupils have limited mental calculation skills and knowledge of strategies. This reduces the pace of their learning and their ability to tackle mathematical problems effectively. However, in most lessons, teachers focus well on these areas, providing regular practice of key skills, such as multiplication tables, and involving many pupils in demonstrating and explaining their thinking. The lessons sampled confirm the school's view that the quality of teaching and learning is improving and becoming more consistent. Many good features were noted and it is clear that teachers are using assessment more effectively to match work to pupils' needs and interests. The success of this is evident in pupils' engagement in and enjoyment of lessons. As one pupil said, 'Teachers are making work more fun, rather than boring; when they make it more fun, you listen more and do better.' In a minority of the lessons, less effective features of teaching were linked to limited pace and challenge. Good attention is being paid to involving pupils in assessing their own and others' work and this is enhancing the quality of learning. Not only does this strategy provide pupils with a good insight into how well they are progressing and how they might improve, it reinforces key ideas as pupils check their own and others' work against clear criteria linked to lesson objectives.

The school's reorganisation of some of its provision for Year 1 pupils is improving learning. Pupils who were in need of learning activities that closely matched those provided for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are benefiting from this reorganisation. The curriculum for all other Year 1 pupils is better matched to their age and stage of development, with first-hand, active learning, indoors and out, characterising the provision.

The senior management team's rigorous analysis of the significant amount of data the school collects has been effectively extended to middle leaders. These leaders' vision for school improvement is now enhanced because it is underpinned by a

better understanding of the data and how this can be used to secure improvements to standards and achievement.

The LA's plan of action for the school is appropriate. The LA has provided good support for the school through the school improvement partner and consultants.

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

Yours sincerely

Margot D'Arcy  
Additional Inspector