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25 September 2008

Mrs S Peck  
The Headteacher  
Moorhill Primary School  
Moorland Road  
Cannock  
Staffordshire  
WS11 4NX

Dear Mrs Peck

Ofsted monitoring of schools with a notice to improve

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I visited your school on 24 September 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 5 and 6 March 2008, the school was asked to:

- raise standards and improve achievement in English, especially writing, and mathematics and science in Years 1 and 6
- ensure assessments are accurate and used rigorously to plan the next steps in pupils' learning so that they are challenged appropriately and make good progress
- develop a more creative curriculum, maximising opportunities for pupils to use their literacy and numeracy skills across the curriculum.

Having considered all the evidence, I am of the opinion that at this time the school is making satisfactory progress.

The school's actions have been well focused and appropriate and well led by the headteacher. She is ably supported by the senior leadership team which has undergone considerable reorganisation to capitalise on the strengths of individual members. Staff continue to be positive and enthusiastic about the changes that have been introduced to enable them to improve their practice so that the pupils make the progress they should to. Monitoring and evaluation are much improved and the school has records of every pupil and the level they are working at. A rigorous programme of lesson observations has ensured that the leadership team, and

particularly the headteacher, have a clear and accurate understanding of the strengths and areas for development in the school. Lesson observations have been supported by scrutiny of pupils' work and analysis of the quality of teacher planning. Clear feedback to teachers about the quality of their work is helping them to make some improvements, however teaching remains satisfactory. Lessons observed jointly with the headteacher during the visit were mainly satisfactory with some good features. The school's own monitoring of teaching confirms that the quality of teaching remains variable across the school. In the lessons observed too much time was spent on introducing the lessons and work was pitched at the middle ability range so a number of pupils were not sufficiently challenged. Pupils are not always given sufficient opportunities to work independently and to engage in discussions. The school is aware that it needs to quicken the pace of improvement with some teachers who continue to lack the expertise to assess pupils' needs accurately in class. This would enable them to plan or adapt their lessons appropriately to meet the needs of individual pupils.

Positive developments in assessment practice at senior management level have led to the school having a better understanding of the levels that pupils are working at and, therefore, of what they need to learn next. The school is one of the 24 schools involved in the county Assessing Pupil Progress (APP) pilot. The local authority, through its recent monitoring, indicates that the school is regarded as 'an exemplar for other schools with regard to its assessment outcomes and procedures'. The monitoring undertaken by the senior leadership team is accurate. It is used well to plan the next steps in helping staff, so that pupils are supported and challenged appropriately. Although standards remain below the national average by the end of Year 6, lesson observations indicate that majority of the pupils are now making satisfactory progress. The progress is better at Key Stage 2 than it is at Key Stage 1, where some teachers still lack the expertise to make accurate assessments of pupils and what they need to do help them improve. The school's assessment data indicates that significantly more pupils are now on course to meet their targets by the end of the year. Many pupils have made satisfactory progress in writing as part of the recent initiatives and training. However, there is still some variability between pupils' rates of progress in different classes. This is due, in part, to high levels of mobility and attendance. Attendance remains below national average. Teachers, particularly in Year 6, know what levels the pupils are working at in English, mathematics and science, and the standards the pupils should achieve. These are regularly shared with the pupils who were able to tell the inspector with confidence the level they were working at and what they needed to do to move on to the next level. Marking in some books is good and helps pupils to understand what they need to do to further improve their work. The pupils in Year 6 spoke highly of recent developments and said that the lessons were much more interesting and that the adults helped them much more in improving their work.

The school has introduced a number of strategies, for example the 'creative learning journey', to develop the curriculum so that it is more creative in the way in which it maximises opportunities for pupils to use their literacy and numeracy skills across the curriculum. The mathematics and science subjects are much more closely linked,

particularly in handling data as part of the scientific investigations. As a consequence, pupils are making satisfactory progress in mathematics and science.

The local authority has provided the school with a wide range of useful support. The local authority's action plan focuses on the key issues raised at the time of the last inspection as well as sensibly focusing on whole school improvement. It has been effective in helping the school to make satisfactory progress overall, although there are still pockets of improvements particularly at Key Stage 1 that need further attention. The school's education improvement partner knows the school well and has worked in partnership with the headteacher to carry out a series of rigorous monitoring activities. His support is highly valued by the school and governors. The school is well placed to continue to improve.

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

Yours sincerely

Rashida Sharif HMI  
Her Majesty's Inspector