

5 December 2008

Mr Ron Leedale
Headteacher
Askern Spa Junior School
Sutton Road
Askern
Doncaster
DN6 0AG

Dear Mr Leedale

Ofsted monitoring of schools with a Notice to Improve

Thank you for the help which you, your staff, the pupils and the chair of governors gave when I inspected your school on 4 December 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 in April 2008, the school was asked to:

- raise standards and improve achievement in English, mathematics and science
- ensure that all pupils benefit from consistently well taught lessons, and maintain a good rate of progress as they pass through each year
- improve attendance.

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.

Achievement and standards have improved since the inspection. In the national tests and assessments in summer 2008, higher proportions of pupils reached the level expected for their age in mathematics and science, which is where improvement was most needed. Previous improvements in English were sustained. Since summer 2008, there has been a significant improvement in the number of pupils working at levels above those expected for their age in all three subjects. The most rapid improvement is in mathematics and writing where much effort has been focused: however, there is evidence that some average and lower attaining groups of pupils are not accelerating their progress in these subjects. School leaders have already identified these groups and have plans to provide additional support to help them to catch up.

Achievement and standards are improving because there is a greater consistency of good and better teaching across the school. A key strength is the effective use of assessment. Most teachers are confidently using similar methods for ensuring that pupils know exactly how much progress they are making towards their learning objectives and what still needs to be improved. Marking is a very effective part of this process. Procedures for involving pupils in assessing their own progress and that of other pupils are developing well. Teachers are becoming increasingly effective in adapting their planning to meet the needs of all groups of pupils. The early positive impact of these improved features of teaching demonstrates that the school has the capacity to enable all groups of pupils to accelerate their progress.

Improving pupils' attendance is an important part of the school's work to raise standards. Attendance figures have risen since the inspection, although they are still below average. A particularly effective strategy has been making poor attenders and their families aware of how much school time they are losing and the negative impact this is having on achievement.

The quality of teaching and learning is improving because senior and middle leaders provide clear guidance and they systematically monitor how well it is being implemented. Leaders continuously monitor pupils' progress and use this information effectively to identify which groups of pupils need additional support. The impact of this support on accelerating the progress of some groups is not yet entirely clear. Leaders also make good use of assessment information to identify key priorities for raising standards and they ensure that all teachers give additional attention to these. A good example of the impact of this aspect of leadership is that a whole-school focus on improving mental calculation methods has led to a significant rise in the number of pupils reaching the expected level for their age in mathematics. Leaders frequently review pupils' progress with each teacher to identify where improvements are needed and this has established a shared accountability amongst all staff for raising standards. The leadership team is clearly demonstrating the capacity to enable teachers to improve their practice and to raise standards further.

The governing body is well informed about the performance of the school and it provides effective support and challenge as required. The local authority's support is effective and complements the work of school leaders in improving the quality of teaching and learning.

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 "J. Rutherford".

John Rutherford
Her Majesty's Inspector