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Protect Inspection

4 December 2008

Miss Sharon Gaskin
The Headteacher
Winton Primary School
Oswald Road
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Dear Miss Gaskin

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 3 December 2008, for the time you gave to our phone discussions, and for the information which you provided before and during my visit. Please pass on my thanks to the pupils and governors who also spent time in conversation with me.

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 22 and 23 April 2008, the school was asked to:

- raise standards, particularly in Key Stage 2 by improving subject leadership
- improve the quality of teaching and learning making sure all pupils are challenged
- improve the quality of academic advice for pupils with better use of targets
- improve leadership and management developing the way performance is evaluated and pupils' progress is tracked.

Since the school's last inspection, there have been changes in personnel including the headteacher, chair of governors, five other governors and four teachers. Two members of staff are currently on long-term sick leave. The management profile of the teaching staff has been reorganised with a new senior leadership team of the headteacher, deputy headteacher and three phase leaders.

The local authority's plan for priority support which formed part of its 'statement of support' for the school, (submitted to Ofsted in June 2008) was found lacking in

some respects. It has been successfully revised to show more clearly who is to take responsibility for actioning and monitoring the success of initiatives. It is now fit for purpose and provides a good basis for improvement. The school is benefiting from the good work of the School Improvement Partner and the expertise of subject and phase advisers from the local authority.

Having considered all the evidence, I am of the opinion that the school is making satisfactory progress in addressing the issues for improvement towards raising pupils' achievement.

There are indications that standards are beginning to rise at both key stages. However, it is too soon to see whether this as a result of new initiatives as opposed to year-group related factors such as a higher proportion of potentially higher attaining pupils or a lower proportion of those with learning difficulties. The recently established management profile is securely underpinned by new job descriptions. These clearly identify responsibilities and show how senior managers and phase leaders are held accountable in terms of pupils' performance. In addition, the staffing structure has been effectively revised to ensure that there is a teacher from every year group in each of the core subject teams for English, mathematics, science and information and communication technology (ICT).

Senior leaders are being trained in observation and monitoring techniques so that they can support the already good work of the headteacher and School Improvement Partner in evaluating the quality of teaching and learning. Records show that all teachers have been observed teaching on a variety of occasions and that effective professional support has been given in order to sustain the improvements noted in the last inspection. For example, learning objectives are now identified for all activities. Nevertheless, the lack of clear short-term planning in some classes makes it difficult to evaluate progress in lessons and is an area for continued improvement. Better long-term planning and consideration of what pupils are capable of have led to improvements in how pupils are challenged. However, while there is a nucleus of good teaching, there are still too many occasions where the same work is set across the ability range as well as an over-reliance on worksheets in some classes. This most obviously affects the standards and achievement of more able pupils. Results of 2008 national assessments for Year 2 and Year 6 show that the percentages of pupils reaching higher levels were well below average.

In order to improve academic guidance the school has recently devised a new marking and assessment policy and circulated guidelines for staff. These are sensible initiatives but have yet to be adopted wholeheartedly by all staff or to have a marked impact on pupils' progress. Where they have been implemented, for

example in literacy in Year 2, teachers are giving pupils pointers to show how they can improve their writing as well as praising and celebrating their efforts.

Throughout the school there has been a concerted effort to make pupils aware of targets that they can aspire to in English, mathematics and, in some classes, science. This has begun to raise the expectations of both pupils and staff and is a positive sign for the future. Pupils are able to say what their targets are and talk confidently of success. The best targets are specific to individuals and are regularly changed as and when they are achieved. However, most pupils have had the same targets since the start of term, 11 weeks ago, and some of these are too general. The process is in need of review, for example to note starting dates and set time deadlines as part of the success criteria.

The new headteacher is having a dramatic effect on the quality of leadership and management. She has made very good use of the support of the local authority and the School Improvement Partner. She has capitalised upon the commitment of the chair and vice-chair of governors and of the governing body in general, and benefited from the active support of many of the staff. Together they have guided everyone to appreciate the need to focus on evaluating the impact of decisions made on outcomes in pupils' learning, achievement and progress. She has successfully led the process of collating and evaluating assessment data and has proved to staff and governors that standards are too low and that pupils have been underachieving. The way information is now presented clearly shows the progress pupils are making (or in some cases are not) and is the basis for predictions of how well pupils might do as well as raising staff expectations. This is a strong indication that the school is on the right track. However, all concerned recognise that there is still much to do to secure and consolidate the necessary improvements to pupils' achievement and avoid the headteacher becoming overloaded by the process.

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

Yours sincerely

Mike Burghart
Additional Inspector