

9 February 2009

Mrs Hilary Loder  
Executive Headteacher  
Green Oak CofE Primary School and Nursery  
Franklyn Road  
Surrey  
Godalming  
GU7 2LD

Dear Mrs Loder

Ofsted monitoring of schools with a notice to improve

Thank you for the help that you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 5 February 2009, 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 staff, chair of the Interim Executive Board, your School Improvement Partner and particularly the pupils for their warm welcome.

Green Oak CofE Primary School (formally St Mark's) was subjected to a radical realignment in September 2008. An experienced executive headteacher was appointed and in addition virtually all staff, and in particular all teachers, were new in September or January. The executive headteacher is also the substantive headteacher of another local infant school and much of the day-to-day running of the school is undertaken by the head of teaching and learning. The school currently caters only for the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 pupils. The numbers of pupils in Key Stage 1 is very small.

As a result of the inspection on 14 May 2008, the school was asked to:

- raise standards in writing and mathematics
- tackle the inadequacies in teaching and raise its quality
- improve attendance and standards of behaviour in the school
- ensure a smooth transition for all children with the formation of the realigned school.

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.

This has been achieved through clear and effective leadership which has focused on establishing a climate where all children are valued as individuals, expectations are high, learning is exciting and family involvement is integral. Staff are a united team, all pulling together to move the school forward. Morale is very high. As one teacher



commented, 'The enthusiasm for supporting children is infectious. The ethos is clear – we are about building individuals!' The executive headteacher has a clear understanding of how to achieve the school's goals and clearly monitors progress using a very good range of evidence. However, she is aware that there is a need to set in place clear success criteria for some aspects of development to judge the impact of innovations.

Key Stage 1 results for national assessments taken by Year 2 in May 2008, prior to the radical realignment, showed that overall standards had improved but were still well below those expected for the pupils' age. There was a particular improvement in standards achieved in mathematics, which were very close to the national average. Standards in writing had also improved. However, standards in reading had fallen significantly.

In September, the Early Years and Foundation Stage data was found to be insecure and all Years 1 and 2 children were reappraised to establish an accurate baseline. These assessments showed that pupils were, at that time, working at standards below, and in many cases well below, those expected for their ages. The school has set aspirational targets for pupils. A continuous and dynamic assessment system based on teacher assessment is now in place and is being used to plan pupils' learning more effectively. This in turn feeds into a good central system to record the information which enables the school to track pupil progress over time. These records show that pupils are now beginning to make good progress.

Children entered the Early Years Foundation Stage in 2008 with standards well below those expected for their age, particularly in terms of communication, language and literacy, and personal and social skills. Improved provision means that the progress made in their learning is now good.

The school's own monitoring records of teaching and learning show the quality to be good. This monitoring visit confirmed the school's judgement of teaching and learning to be accurate. The improved learning and focused intervention in Key Stage 1 is beginning to enable pupils to catch up on ground lost previously, particularly for Year 2. However, the school knows that this must be built upon to raise standards to the level they should be.

Teachers plan creative and exciting lessons based round clear learning objectives. Thus, the pupils are motivated and engaged. Relationships in lessons are good; pupils behave well and are willing to participate in activities, frequently working well together. Teachers are clear about what they want the pupils to do, although occasionally pupils would benefit from further modelling of activities. Classes are well supported by teaching assistants who provide pupils with effective help. The Early Years Foundation Stage areas have been well resourced with new equipment which provides a stimulating environment to ensure that the demands of the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum are met. Planning is improving and many opportunities are provided for pupils to play and work together in a variety of contexts.

Behaviour throughout the school is much improved. This is because the climate for learning is good. Staff use lots of praise, there are clearly understood expectations of behaviour and pupils are clear about the consequences of misbehaving. In addition, they are motivated by curriculum developments, such as the Food for Life project, that generate enquiry and enjoyment for pupils. As a consequence, attendance has significantly improved.

A major success of the realigned school has been the degree to which it has fostered good links with the local community and in particular parents/carers. They are very positive about the 'new' school. Many now spend the first part of each school day reading with their child in class in addition to attending the weekly celebration assemblies or participating in the family learning events. The school provides effective support to the most vulnerable pupils and their families through the homelink worker. This is set to be strengthened by the imminent location of part of the local children's centre on site.

The local authority (LA) provides good-quality support to the school and has appropriately amended its statement of action. In particular, the school has benefited from consultants working in the classroom with class teachers to improve the teaching of literacy and numeracy. In addition, the LA set up a steering group to oversee the transition for all children with the formation of the realigned school. The realignment was managed well and the steering group is carefully monitoring the impact on both pupils remaining at Green Oak and those who transferred to a local junior school. The Interim Executive Board has provided the headteacher with effective support while holding her clearly to account. Plans are in place to appoint and induct a shadow governing body.

I hope that you have found the visit helpful in promoting improvement in your school. This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Maria Dawes  
H M Inspector