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Mr C Muscatelli
Headteacher
Phoenix Primary School
Birchfield Road
Liverpool
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Dear Mr Muscatelli

Ofsted Monitoring of Grade 3 schools

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 26 March 2009, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during my visit. I would also like to thank your staff and pupils, who were particularly helpful.

As a result of the inspection on 23 and 24 January 2008, the school was asked to:

- raise standards in English, mathematics and science throughout the school
- improve teaching and learning so that it is at least good in all classes, enabling pupils to achieve as well as they can
- extend the use of learning targets so that pupils know how to improve their work in subjects other than English
- improve the use of and analysis of performance data to raise standards and achievement.

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.

Since the previous inspection, there has been an improving trend in standards in English, mathematics and science across Key Stages 1 and 2. In particular, assessment data for 2008 indicate significant improvement in mathematics standards, which are now much closer to the national average. Standards in English and science have also shown an overall improvement in recent years. English standards at the end of Key Stage 2 were a little lower in 2008 compared to the previous year, largely due to the nature of that particular Year 6 cohort which included several pupils who were at the early stages of learning English as well as a relatively high proportion who had learning difficulties. Nevertheless, the great majority of these pupils met the targets set for them, and some, including those at the early stages of learning English, achieved well in mathematics and science. Inspection evidence indicates that standards are continuing to rise.

This rising trend is linked to the school's work on improving the quality of teaching and learning and establishing greater consistency. Since the last inspection, there has been considerable emphasis on the professional development of staff. Work in partnership with the local authority as part of the intensive support programme has focused sharply on raising standards in English, mathematics and science. An appropriate range of teaching strategies is used in all classrooms, and staff are becoming increasingly skilled in assessing the progress made by individual pupils and groups of pupils. A recent focus on improved strategies for assessing pupils' progress is beginning to assist staff in identifying any gaps in learning, and is also helping to inform teachers' planning. Support for pupils with learning difficulties, judged to be good during the last inspection, remains strong. In addition, intervention work to support other groups of learners is developing, with teachers and teaching assistants working cooperatively to provide tailored support where needed. The school's monitoring of teaching and learning reflects an overall improvement in the consistency of classroom practice.

Another factor contributing to rising standards has been the emphasis on providing more opportunities for pupils to practise their literacy and numeracy skills across the curriculum. The school has also recognised the importance of a strong focus on developing pupils' speaking and listening skills, and this is being addressed from the Early Years Foundation Stage through to Year 6. The Early Years Foundation Stage is involved in a national pilot scheme to accelerate children's progress in speaking and listening, which includes collaborative work with parents. There are already signs that this project is starting to have a positive impact on children's skills, as well as further enhancing the school's relationships with parents. Work elsewhere in the school is also proving successful. For example, a group of Key Stage 2 pupils have developed considerable confidence in speaking and enhanced their writing skills through a project carried out in collaboration with a local radio station and a neighbouring school.

The use of target-setting in English has been extended to other subjects, and this is helping pupils to understand their individual aims and what they need to do to improve their work. The use of data to support achievement has improved across the school. Class teachers track pupils' individual progress carefully, and this is then monitored by senior leaders and subject leaders, who scrutinise pupils' work and observe learning. This is contributing to improvements in outcomes for pupils. All staff have taken a strong collaborative approach to school improvement and are working effectively as a team with the aim of accelerating progress further.

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

Yours sincerely

Julie Price Grimshaw
Additional Inspector