

Cambridge
Education
Demeter House
Station Road
Cambridge
CB1 2RS

T 08456 40 40 40
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk

Direct T 01223 578500
Direct F 01223 578501
risp.inspections@camb-ed.com



12 February 2009

The Headteacher
Shirley Community Nursery and Primary School
Green End Road
Cambridge
Cambridgeshire
CB4 1RW

Dear Mrs Leach,

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 4 February 2009, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during my visit. Please thank those staff and governors who gave their time to talk with me. I would also like to thank the children at the school for being so friendly and welcoming and talking with me about their work.

This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website.

As a result of the inspection on 4 – 5 March 2008, the school was asked to:

- Raise standards in English, mathematics and science at Key Stages 1 and 2.
- Improve the attendance of pupils.
- Improve the provision for the potentially higher attainers.

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.

Good progress has been made in enhancing the provision for the higher attaining pupils, especially in the upper part of the school. For example, the mathematics withdrawal group of Year 6 pupils provides good opportunities for developing high level thinking and recording skills, including the use of some advanced technical vocabulary. It is too soon to evaluate the impact of this on standards and achievement but discussions with pupils indicate that they are well motivated by these additional opportunities.

The most recent test results showed standards in reading, writing and mathematics were well below average at Year 2, and exceptionally low at Year 6, where attainment in English was particularly weak. Detailed analysis of whole school data by the leadership and a thorough analysis of the test papers by subject leaders have enabled the school to make adjustments to the curriculum and increase the level of support through a good range of intervention strategies. However, on current evidence, the school is unlikely to achieve its Year 6 targets for the 2009 national tests. Writing remains the weakest area of English and pupils have many gaps in their understanding of, for example, punctuation skills and common spelling rules. Not all teachers have the secure awareness of age-related expectations that would allow them to target these errors and prevent those becoming barriers to future learning. However, the presentation of pupils' work is good; with most pupils using a flowing joined script for their writing. The local authority has produced a detailed plan for the school and provided a range of valuable support through consultants and advisers aimed at raising standards. The impact of this is subject to regular evaluation by key personnel.

Revised systems are making the analysis of standards and progress more detailed and informative. These changes are also giving pupils a much clearer view of their own level of success. The school has devised a list of 'non-negotiable' expectations for each year group; for example, in writing, which give a sharper focus on age related expectations. However, the school is less effective in making direct comparisons for the progress of different groups of pupils in relation to their national averages. Closing the gap between the school's performance for these different groups of pupils and national averages will be vital in raising achievement. While the school's most recent assessment shows an overall improvement in the rate of pupils' progress, this will need to be accelerated even further to significantly reduce the current gap between the school and national expectations.

Attendance figures for last term show an improvement over the previous year. Much of this is due to an effective reward system, popular with the pupils, and the work of the school's attendance officer. The school is rigorous in tackling persistent absentees, but it lacks a range of strategies to address the frequent, casual absences. While all parents are provided with information about their child's attendance, this should be given a sharper focus to make the link between good attendance and pupils' progress more explicit.

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

Yours sincerely

John Francis
Additional Inspector