

20 May 2009

Mrs Lynn Treadway
Headteacher
Sandbach Community Primary School
Crewe Road
Sandbach
Cheshire East
CW11 4NS

Dear Mrs Treadway

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 19 May 2009, for the time you gave to our phone discussions, and for the information which you provided before and during my visit. Please thank the governors and pupils on my behalf for their helpful contributions to the inspection.

As a result of the inspection on 13 and 14 October 2008, the school was asked to:

- raise standards and improve achievement
- improve the quality of teaching and learning and ensure that pupils receive clear guidance on how to improve their work
- improve the rigour and focus of monitoring, evaluation and planning at all levels of management to ensure that effective steps are taken to secure improvement.

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.

Since the last inspection there have been some changes to staffing. One member of staff has resigned and been replaced by a teacher seconded by the local authority from another school. Another member of staff is on long term sick leave and she has been replaced by a temporary teacher. The senior management team has been extended to include the seconded teacher, who has responsibility for Key Stage 1. The three vacancies on the governing body have yet to be filled.

Overall, results of the national assessments and tests are as reported at the time of the last inspection in October 2008. The standards reached by 7 year olds in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Key Stage 1 are well below the national average. Very few pupils reached the higher Level 3, indicating that the more able pupils in particular do not reach the standards of which they are capable.



This has been the picture for the past two years. At the end of Key Stage 2 the standards reached by pupils in English and mathematics are below average. They are well below average in science. The number of pupils reaching the higher Level 5 is well below average, particularly in science. Again, this indicates that the more able pupils are not reaching their potential. Because pupil numbers are relatively low and the flow of pupils in and out of the school is slightly higher than found nationally, there are expected variations in the overall standards reached year on year. However, in 2008 the progress made by pupils between Key Stage 1 and the end of Key Stage 2 was inadequate.

The school now knows how well all pupils are achieving. Senior leaders have increased the rigour with which they track pupils' progress and identify the pupils who are not doing as well as they should. The school's own data, supported by the work in pupils' exercise books, indicates that a large proportion of pupils in Key Stages 1 and 2 are underachieving. Standards in all year groups are well below those expected nationally, but this is significantly worse in Years 5 and 6 because there is a legacy of underachievement which has yet to be overcome. Overall, pupils' progress is inadequate. However, pupils in most classes are progressing at an increasing rate and, as a result, more pupils are closer to reaching national standards and achieving their potential. Senior leaders recognise that there is still much more to be done and have plans of good quality to raise pupils' achievement further.

The quality of teaching is improving. During this inspection, most lessons observed were satisfactory and a small proportion was good. Where teaching was good, teachers have high expectations of pupils: this is reflected in the better quality and quantity of work in pupils' books. Teachers explain what pupils are expected to learn clearly and their marking supports this well. Good use is made of the interactive whiteboards and teachers are imaginative in their use of resources to interest the pupils. Relationships in the better lessons are excellent, teachers understand the needs and abilities of the pupils well and this is demonstrated in their good quality planning. Where teaching is weaker, teachers do not take good enough account of what pupils already know and their expectations of what pupils are capable of achieving are too low. There is an over-reliance on national schemes of work, which are not adapted sufficiently to match pupils' abilities. Frequently, the needs and interests of the pupils are not captured by the teacher. Consequently, although pupils are attentive in lessons, they are not well motivated and the work they produce is barely adequate. For example, although pupils visited Cadbury's World as part of their topic work, this was not used effectively as a stimulus for pupils' writing. The senior leadership team has secured some good improvements in marking, by involving the pupils in analysing what is effective. In most classes, marking is now of a satisfactory quality and pupils understand what it means. Most teachers give time for pupils to look at how well they have achieved and to work out whether they have improved. However, marking does not yet give pupils enough information about the next steps in their learning and there is a lack of rigour in expectations across the school. Teaching assistants provide good support to pupils identified with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. However, the management of teaching assistant time

and the allocation of pupils does not always ensure that all pupils are provided with an equal opportunity to achieve. The senior leadership team, with effective support from the local authority, has a clear picture of the strengths and weakness in teaching and has secured improvement since the previous inspection.

As at the time of the previous inspection the pupils' behaviour is good. Pupils have a strong commitment to the school and local community. They are keen to achieve well. The pupils generally enjoy the topics they study and are proud of their hand-made books. They say they feel safe in school and are happy to talk to staff if they have a problem, though they feel that their social problems are not always resolved successfully.

The local authority is providing strong support to the school through sourcing additional staffing, personnel support and visits by consultants and advisors. The regular 'focus reviews' provide the school with a clear analysis of the impact of leaders and managers on improving the outcomes for pupils and progress to date. This is enabling the senior leadership team to improve their self-evaluation skills and to direct their actions more effectively. They appreciate the support of the local authority school improvement partner and adviser. Governors are not yet holding the school's managers sufficiently to account for the outcomes achieved by pupils. They use their experience well to support the headteacher both in working with staff and to secure support for the school's most vulnerable pupils and families. However, the governing body's view of the overall context in which the school works is heavily influenced by this. Governors are not yet using all the information available to ensure that leaders and managers have high enough expectations or are securing the necessary improvements. The capacity of the governing body to secure improvement is limited by the current vacancies.

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

Gill Jones
Her Majesty's Inspector