

12 February 2008

Mrs A Cruickshank
Headteacher
Arboretum Primary School
Corden Street
Derby
Derbyshire
DE23 8GP

Dear Mrs Cruickshank

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 5 February 2009, for the time you gave to our telephone discussion, and for the information which you provided before and during my visit. Would you please pass my thanks on to the pupils and staff for taking the time to talk to me?

There have been some significant staffing changes since the last inspection. Six teachers have left the school. In January 2009, an assistant headteacher joined the senior leadership team. She also serves as coordinator for the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). A permanent coordinator for mathematics took up post at the same time. In October 2008, 18 pupils from Eastern Europe joined the school.

The letter will be posted on the Ofsted website.

As a result of the inspection on 28 and 29 January 2008, the school was asked to:

- raise standards, particularly in mathematics
- increase the amount of good teaching by building on current strengths and developing the role of co-ordinators to include classroom observations
- ensure that the more able pupils are consistently well challenged
- ensure that teachers and co-ordinators systematically use assessment information to guide teaching and plans for school improvement.

Having considered all the evidence, I am of the opinion that at this time the school is making inadequate progress in addressing the issues for improvement and in raising pupils' achievement.

Standards remain well below average throughout the school. Although there is evidence of improvement in the EYFS, just 10 out of 45 children are on track to have gained the expected skills in Communication, Language and Literacy on entry to

Year 1. In Year 2, the school's own data show declining standards, particularly in reading where fewer than half of the pupils are on track to achieve Level 2. Standards improved at the end of Key Stage 2 in 2008, though they remained well below average. The school judges that the present Year 6 pupils are building upon this improvement. However, progress has been very variable for pupils in Key Stage 2 since the last inspection, and the proportion of pupils making insufficient progress is too high and overall standards remain too low.

The headteacher has shown great determination to improve provision and has tackled weaknesses in teaching. However, she recognises that standards are not rising quickly enough because too much teaching remains no better than satisfactory. There are still lessons where the activities fail to build upon pupils' earlier experiences and where adults supporting pupils have low expectations of what pupils can do independently. A further barrier to effective teaching and learning is the school's open plan design. Younger pupils, in particular, struggle to focus on what their teacher is saying above the noise from other teaching groups. This limits the opportunities for them to hear adults modelling English well and crucially, to contribute in turn sustained and audible oral responses. When pupils do speak, there is a tendency for adults to rephrase or repeat their contributions. This does not promote good speaking or listening. During the inspection, there was evidence of effective teaching where activities offered just the right amount of challenge and pupils worked enthusiastically. Marking in literacy books indicates that teachers are increasingly aware of the importance of helping pupils understand how successfully they have met learning objectives and how they can improve their work. Subject co-ordinators have had limited impact on improving learning. They are still developing the skills of leadership and whilst they plan to observe lessons in the future, the headteacher, and the former numeracy coordinator, have led on this since the last inspection.

There has been satisfactory progress towards improving the provision for more able pupils. Planning and work in the pupils' books show that these pupils receive teaching that challenges and extends their learning more regularly. The proportion of pupils reaching the highest level at the end of Key Stage 2 increased last year. The school's targets show a commitment to building upon this improvement.

Tracking and assessment procedures provide plenty of information about pupils' progress and levels of learning. However, these have not been evaluated sharply enough to give the staff and governors a precise understanding of how well individual year groups and classes are progressing through this school year. This limits their ability to identify and tackle promptly the factors leading to underachievement. Subject leaders are conducting scrutinies of books, planning and assessment papers. However, although they inform teachers of areas for development, they do not systematically monitor how effectively teachers are addressing weaknesses.

The school has not been included in the group of schools identified by the local authority (LA) as requiring the highest level of support. Consequently, whilst the

school values the additional support it has received this term and understands the LA's need to prioritise resources, it regrets that assistance to improve classroom practice was not available sooner. In their determination to secure effective teaching and subject leadership, the headteacher and governors have relied on support from the LA for expert advice. On occasions, they judge they have not received the guidance required promptly.

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

Anthony O'Malley
Her Majesty's Inspector