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24 June 2010

Ms Sue Finch
Headteacher
Westminster Community Primary School
John Street
Ellesmere Port
Cheshire
CH65 2ED

Dear Ms Finch

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 23 June 2010, for the time you gave to our telephone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during my visit. I am also grateful to your deputy headteacher, subject leader for mathematics and the Chair and vice-chair of the Governing Body for meeting with me and to your School Improvement Partner and local authority adviser for speaking with me on the telephone. Finally, please pass on my thanks to your staff and pupils for their warm welcome and openness in discussion.

As a result of the inspection on 2–3 July 2008, the school was asked to

- Raise standards in English, mathematics and science in Key Stage 2.
- Improve teaching and learning so that the quality of all lessons is good.
- Develop the leadership skills of subject leaders.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time the school has made:

good progress in making improvements.

and

good progress in demonstrating a better capacity for sustained improvement.

At the time of this monitoring inspection the class teacher for Years 3 and 4 had been unwell and absent from school since Easter 2010. Since then, a temporary teacher had taught the class. This arrangement was changed in the week of the monitoring inspection so that the Year 3 and Year 4 pupils were taught separately by two supply teachers.

The school is making good progress in raising standards in English, mathematics and science in Key Stage 2. National test results in 2009 rose sharply in mathematics and in science so that, for the first time in several years, average standards were attained. Standards in English also rose but remained low. School leaders have rightly prioritised raising achievement in English with a particular focus on writing. The result is that there is now a good range of writing opportunities across the curriculum, Year 5 and 6 pupils, for example, demonstrating improving persuasive writing skills in letters to local supermarkets encouraging them to sell fairly traded produce. Work seen in pupils' books indicates that standards are continuing to rise and particularly so in English. Current indications are that Year 6 pupils in 2010 will attain below average standards in English which will represent much improved rates of progress from their starting points than in the past. As we discussed and agreed, what is often preventing average standards being attained is the pupils' irregular use of spellings, punctuation and tenses in their writing.

Leaders have also made good progress in improving the quality of teaching and learning through regular checking, the inculcating of a strong work ethic throughout the school and quick and appropriate programmes of support for pupils in danger of falling behind. Both you and your deputy headteacher check regularly the quality of teaching and learning throughout the school, through observing teachers teach and scrutinising their planning and the work pupils produce. Your work in this checking of quality is being complemented well by the growing skills of subject leaders. Overall, leaders identify accurately strengths in teaching and areas to improve. We discussed and agreed the need now to articulate more clearly in evaluations made how these improvements in the quality of teaching impact on the learning of pupils.

During the monitoring inspection, five lessons were observed – one in each class. One lesson was satisfactory, three were good and one was outstanding. This represents improvement since the last inspection. In the outstanding lesson in the Year 5 and 6 class, the teacher and her teaching assistant focused sharply the pupils' attention to the use of clear directional language to create visitor guides to Conway Castle. The teacher set high expectations, made use of clear success criteria, asked challenging questions and used the interactive whiteboard very well to set the scene for learning drawing on the pupils' recent residential visit to North Wales. The result was that pupils were fully engaged in their learning, they were able to share ideas with each other confidently and began to produce clear and informative guides. Good quality questioning and prompting by teachers and their assistants were observed in all lessons.

Good progress has been made in developing the leadership skills of subject leaders. Discussions with, for example, the leader for mathematics highlighted that they have a good overview of quality and standards in their subjects through scrutinising teachers' planning plus the building up of portfolios of pupils' work which allows them to compare and moderate standards across the school. These improvements have come about because you have empowered subject leaders through establishing clear roles and responsibilities and by insisting on them being accountable, ensuring for example they report regularly to the governing body. Their plans for improvement are clear and feed into the overarching whole school plan well. In our discussions we agreed the next step was to ensure that all action plans make clear the intended outcomes for pupils.

The previous inspections and monitoring visits have all identified strengths in your leadership as headteacher. These are still evident now and, coupled with strengths in your deputy headteacher as a model of outstanding teaching, the good improvements in subject leadership and the acute awareness of the governors of the strengths and areas for development enhance the overall quality of leadership throughout the school. The result is that this is a school that knows itself well and continues to make improvements in the standards pupils attain.

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

Mark Williams
Her Majesty's Inspector