

Suite 22 West
Lancs
Investment Centre
Maple View
Skelmersdale
WN8 9TG

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

Direct T 01695 566930
Direct F 01695 729320

22 April 2010

Mrs Jenny Davies
Headteacher
Offley Primary School
Offley Road
Sandbach
Cheshire
CW11 1GY

Dear Mrs Davies

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools

Thank you for the help which you gave when I inspected your school on 21 April 2010, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during my visit. Please also pass on my thanks to your chair of governors, staff, members of the school council and the parent volunteer for the time they gave to meet with me, and to the pupils who were happy to speak with me around the school.

Since the last inspection there have been several staff changes, including some at leadership level, for example, the appointment of a new deputy headteacher and a restructuring of key leadership roles and responsibilities. Local authority reorganisation proposals have resulted in changes to the school's planned admission number with effect from September 2010. Governors and leaders are continuing to manage potential staffing reductions and the implications of a forthcoming building project.

As a result of the inspection on 30 April – 1 May 2008, the school was asked to:

- improve the consistency of teaching so that all pupils are challenged to achieve as well as they can
- ensure that marking and academic guidance are used consistently well to improve achievement and raise standards further
- strengthen communication with parents and carers so they are fully aware of how they can support their children's learning.

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.

In 2008, test results at the end of Key Stage 2 showed that pupils' overall performance was below average. This was particularly affected by low results in English and by the high proportion of pupils in that cohort who had experienced difficulties in their learning. While Key Stage 2 results in 2009 improved significantly to be above average in English, mathematics and science, the school recognises that this does not yet reflect consistently good progress for the majority of pupils. It did, however, indicate the positive impact of the work of the restructured leadership team, generating a strong momentum for improvement.

There is a clear, whole-school focus on improving the quality of pupils' learning by developing teachers' skills and awareness of best practice. As a result, the consistency of teaching and the level of challenge provided for all pupils are improving well. The school's monitoring and evaluation of teaching are rigorous and accurate, enabling clear identification of strengths and areas for development. When teaching is no better than satisfactory, teacher talk and direction is more evident than pupil activity and learning. Questioning is not used as effectively as it might be to elicit responses that demonstrate and extend pupils' learning, and teachers' expectations of the pupils are insufficiently high. Joint observations carried out by the inspector alongside senior leaders confirm their view that a larger proportion of teaching is now good or better. Very positive relationships and a sense of enthusiasm and enjoyment are evident in most lessons. A common feature is the development of pupils' key skills that are transferable across subjects: independence, creative thinking, use of information and communication technology, research, teamwork and problem-solving. This reflects the school's ethos and commitment to providing a curriculum based on a thematic approach. The positive impact of this is evident in the high quality termly topic books produced by every child and proudly presented and displayed around the school. Pupils also benefit from the work of dedicated teaching assistants who work skilfully alongside teachers and contribute to the pupils' good motivation to learn.

The school has developed thorough tracking systems to check on pupils' rates of progress and identify where intervention is needed. Teachers have responded well to being held accountable for the progress made by pupils in their class and share a determination to ensure that pupils achieve the best they can. The school's marking policy provides appropriate guidance that teachers are applying more consistently, with detailed comments and 'next steps' feedback to pupils. This is particularly evident in writing, as a result of the school's focus on this aspect. Its success can be seen in the improving quality of writing across the school. Most pupils are now

aware of their specific learning targets in each of the core subjects and of what they need to do to achieve these.

The school works hard to develop its communication with parents and carers continually, which has improved well since the last inspection. Good use is made of electronic methods such as the website, 'learning platform' and even text messaging where needed. The school seeks the views of parents and as a result of feedback, has increased the number of parents' evenings held in a year. Curriculum leaders' subject presentations have been well attended by parents. Homework planners and reading records provide opportunities for written communication between home and school if required. Information on pupils' progress and targets is shared regularly and the school is committed to responding swiftly to any concerns that parents may have. Governors acknowledge that the seeking of stakeholder views is an area that they can develop further. They have begun to hold 'surgeries' for parents and carers and are seeking ways to develop their section of the school's website. Parents are welcomed into school and offers of help are gratefully accepted. A number of parents are regular volunteers in classroom activities or external visits, working alongside teaching and support staff to make a positive contribution to pupils' learning and personal development.

Prior to the autumn term 2008, the school had been receiving an enhanced level of support from the local authority. The school has made the most of those opportunities to develop its provision further. The headteacher articulates a clear and shared vision for the school, where underperformance is not acceptable, and she is supported by a very capable leadership team. Staff have responded well with strong teamwork and mutual respect. Consequently, the school is now demonstrating a much improved capacity for further development and an upward trend in pupils' achievements. The School's Improvement Partner provides appropriate challenge and guidance, reporting back to leaders and governors following termly visits.

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

Marguerite McCloy
Her Majesty's Inspector