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Mrs Kathryn Magiera  
Witton Church Walk C of E Primary School  
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Northwich  
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Dear Mrs Magiera

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 05 May 2010 and for the information which you provided during my visit.

A substantive headteacher started at the school at the end of February replacing the acting headteachers who have been leading the school intermittently over the last two years. Two temporary teachers, both newly qualified, started at the school after the Easter holiday replacing two teachers. Since the inspection there have been extensive changes to the resources, accommodation, curriculum and the teaching for the children in Nursery and Reception. There have also been changes to the management and leadership roles of some of the permanent teachers.

As a result of the inspection on 12–13 October 2009, the school was asked to:

- Raise standards in reading and writing by the end of Key Stage 1 by:
  - eliminating inadequate teaching and making sure more is of a good enough quality to improve pupils' progress
  - ensuring that assessments are used to plan more appropriately challenging learning activities for pupils in Years 1 and 2.
- Improve the provision and outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage by:
  - eliminating inadequate teaching
  - improving the organisation of the curriculum and learning opportunities
  - increasing the effectiveness of the leadership in the Early Years Foundation Stage.



Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time the school is making good progress in tackling the issues for improvement and in raising pupils' achievement and good progress in increasing the school's capacity to improve.

Teachers' assessments, the scrutiny of pupils' work and observations of lessons indicate that the rate of pupils' progress and pupils' achievement are improving. A greater proportion of pupils are on track to meet their challenging targets and attainment in reading and writing is improving well. There is still some way to go, however, to tackle the gaps in pupils' writing skills fully. Pupils' progress, for example, is being hindered by the overuse of low-level worksheets in lessons. This prevents them from writing at length and developing the skills they need to reach the next level. Pupils' reading is improving as is their ability to understand and analyse different texts. In one very good guided reading session, for example, pupils were able to infer what characters in the book were feeling and the reasons behind the characters' actions.

During the inspection two Key Stage 1 lessons were observed. These, plus evidence from observations undertaken by senior leaders and local authority advisers, indicate that inadequate teaching has been eliminated. Teachers plan and teach lessons that are based on a daily evaluation of pupils' learning. This means they are able to provide activities that are challenging and meet pupils' needs. In the observed lessons pupils were active learners and teachers used some good skills to make learning fast paced and fun.

Since the inspection, provision for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage has improved and, consequently, their outcomes are also improving. The organisation of the classrooms and outdoor area has changed significantly since the inspection to allow children to flow freely between them. These changes mean the school is now able to meet the requirements of the Early Years Foundation Stage fully. Inadequate teaching has been eliminated. Three lessons in the Nursery and Reception classes were observed as part of this inspection. Teaching was lively, motivating and there was a good level of interaction between adults and children. There was a good balance between teacher-led and child-initiated activities. In both year groups there are more opportunities for children to practise their writing inside and outside. When teachers teach sessions about letters and sounds there is a very good balance between speaking, listening, writing and reading. There is scope to make further improvements to ensure that there is a clear learning focus, particularly outdoors, so that children can extend their existing skills and knowledge.

The leadership of the Early Years Foundation Stage has also improved. There is a greater level of monitoring and evaluation and a greater focus on outcomes for children. Leaders identified, for example, that children were less secure in their achievement in the shape, space and measures strand of mathematics. As a result, they made changes to the resources and provision. This has begun to increase children's achievement in that strand. Senior leaders have an accurate view of the quality of learning in lessons. This is being used well to raise the quality of teaching



and learning, particularly in Key Stage 1 and the Early Years Foundation Stage. The new headteacher has made changes to clarify the roles and responsibilities of senior leaders and to amend some of the school's management structures to ensure that all staff are accountable for the progress of pupils in their class. There has also been an improvement to the system which tracks pupils' achievement.

The impact of the support from the local authority has been satisfactory. The support from experienced headteachers seconded from their schools and from a range of consultants and advisers has enabled the school to remain stable during the last two years of turbulence. Yet within the last two years standards have fallen significantly and it is only since the appointment of the new headteacher and two new teachers that pupils' achievement has started to improve quickly. The local authority produced a statement of action which was deemed initially to be not fit for purpose. This has now been amended and the revised plan is appropriate and fit for purpose.

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

Allan Torr  
Her Majesty's Inspector