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Mrs Sally Craigen
Headteacher
Western Community Primary School
Rutland Road
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Tyne and Wear
NE28 8QL

Dear Mrs Craigen

Ofsted monitoring of Notice to Improve schools

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 8 May 2008, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during my visit. Please pass on my particular thanks to the staff and pupils who spoke so openly to me and to the chair of governors and representatives of the local authority (LA).

As a result of the inspection on 17 and 18 September 2007, the school was asked to:

- Ensure consistent and at least satisfactory progress for pupils across all subjects, and particularly in English and mathematics.
- Ensure procedures for target-setting and tracking pupils' progress are robust and effective.
- Ensure that the governing body holds the school to account with regard to pupils' progress.

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

The headteacher and senior leadership team have tackled the main issues facing the school promptly and effectively. School self-evaluation is accurate. Data collected from monitoring activities is evaluated rigorously and areas requiring further improvement are identified. The school has opted, rightly, to implement long term strategies in order to ensure that the improvements made are sustained over time. So, for example, all staff are involved in assessing pupils' work and collecting data to inform the tracking system and school self-evaluation. Not all teachers are developing new skills at the same rate but all are improving as the result of effective training, support and guidance. The headteacher and governors have invested in

additional resources and staffing. This is supporting teachers in their day-to-day work and is helping them improve their understanding, knowledge and skills.

The school has increased the regularity and rigour of activities designed to check the progress made by individual pupils. The school tracking system is updated each term with the results of standardised tests and teacher assessments. Tracking data shows that most pupils are making better progress. Many appear to have improved their attainment by two and sometimes three or four sub levels in the months since the inspection. While this is heartening for those pupils and their teachers, inspection evidence suggests that this data may be a little optimistic in some cases. However, the consistency and accuracy of assessment is improving over time and the tracking system provides useful information. This information is evaluated and used to plan future improvements. It is helping the school to set increasingly challenging targets

The school is using national intervention programmes to good effect but is also developing very useful tailor-made solutions to improve specific weaknesses in particular year groups or across the school. Where pupils learn best teachers use information gained from tracking data and day-to-day assessments effectively to ensure that the work pupils are given meets their most pressing needs. Where the use of assessment is less well developed some pupils do not progress as well as they might because, although the work they are given is appropriate for their age and to the needs of most pupils in the class, it does not challenge them enough. All books are marked in accordance with the school's policy but, at this comparatively early stage, there are variations in the quality of marking. Where it is most helpful it not only tells pupils how to improve but also gives them time to act on the advice given and respond to teachers' comments. The use of self-evaluation and peer evaluation is also improving and many teachers provide helpful guidance to support pupils in these activities.

Pupils are responding to new initiatives enthusiastically. They report that lessons are more exciting and that there are more practical activities. Although not all pupils know their current levels of attainment or their targets, they do know where their targets can be found and how they will know they have reached them. Most believe that their targets are appropriate and think that their teachers give them good support so they know how to improve.

School data indicates that the results of national tests and assessments will improve this year, particularly at Level 5 in English and mathematics. While this would be welcome, the real gains will be seen over the longer term. The legacy of underachievement is being eradicated and although progress is not yet consistent within all classes or across the school, inspection evidence indicates that standards are rising and pupils' achievement is improving.

Governance is improving. The school now has a full complement of governors and new governors have brought some much needed expertise to the role. Well targeted training together with additional meetings and information provided by the school have improved the confidence and understanding of individual governors. The governing body is beginning to ask challenging questions in order to hold the school to account.

Local authority support has been effective in recent months, as demonstrated by improvements in pupils' progress evident from the beginning of the spring term, but developed slowly in the first months after the inspection. The local authority statement of action is satisfactory but does not identify how actions will be monitored or how improvements will be evaluated. However, the recent review of the school, although carried out earlier than planned, provides useful information to help the school improve further.

I hope that you have found the visit helpful in promoting improvement in your school.

Yours sincerely

Christine Graham
Her Majesty's Inspector