

30 June 2008

Mrs S Mott  
Headteacher  
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Cheshire  
SK14 5PL

Dear Mrs Mott

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 26 June 2008, for the time you gave to our discussions and for the information which you provided before and during my visit. Please can you pass on my thanks to the pupils and governors.

This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website. Please inform the Regional Inspection Service Provider of any factual inaccuracies within 24 hours of the receipt of this letter.

As a result of the inspection on 28 February 2007, the school was asked to do the following:

- Improve standards in reading, mathematics and science.
- Strengthen provision in the Foundation Stage and links with Year 1.
- Monitor teaching and its effect on children's progress more accurately.
- Use all information gathered to form an up-to-date view of the school's effectiveness so that plans for development have a more immediate effect on standards and achievement.

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

Following the inspection, the school instigated a number of initiatives to improve standards in reading. In the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1, the focus has been on the development of early reading skills through a programme of phonics teaching, and individual and group reading. Although the results in the Key Stage 1 national assessments in 2007 were the lowest for a number of years, there are signs of improvement in the current Year 2. Intervention programmes, regular individual and group reading and more focused teaching in Key Stage 2 are yielding better results. Standards in English by the end of Year 6 rose significantly in 2007. Senior leaders carefully target intervention programmes to pupils who are underachieving. The

results are analysed to ensure that the different programmes are having a positive impact on a greater number of pupils. As a result, standards in reading are higher across Key Stage 2 than they were at the time of the last inspection.

The school recognises that there are widespread weaknesses in mathematics and, rightly, this is going to be the focus for the coming year. Validated 2007 and unvalidated 2008 results of the national assessments show that standards in mathematics in the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 are well below average. In contrast, standards in Year 6 rose significantly in 2007 after a number of years well below the national average. Underachievement, however, and very low standards remain in most classes. Work seen during the monitoring inspection, and the school's own data, indicate that progress is barely satisfactory. This needs to be tackled with urgency. In science, greater emphasis on scientific enquiry and better teaching has driven standards to their highest level for a number of years.

Overall, progress in Key Stage 2 has been inadequate, particularly for boys and pupils from a White British heritage. To raise standards further and ensure better progress, the school has focused appropriately on improving teaching and learning. Inspection evidence indicates that regular monitoring of lessons provides senior leaders with a clear and accurate understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. The school recognises that while lessons are generally of an acceptable quality, there is some way to go before teaching and learning are good enough to raise achievement significantly. The proportion of good lessons has improved since the last inspection and there are clear strengths in Key Stage 2. Consequently, there are signs in pupils' work and in their most recent test results that their progress is accelerating. There are weaknesses in some Key Stage 1 and Foundation Stage classes that need to be tackled urgently. In these classes, teachers' expectations are low and pupils' progress is stifled by having to complete low level activities which do not extend their skills or their thinking.

Significant turbulence in staffing was highlighted at the previous inspection. This remains an issue, particularly in the Foundation Stage. The school has worked well with the local authority to resolve the issues and to minimise disruption to children's learning. This has meant, however, the impact of some initiatives has been not as strong as it could have been. Improvements to the building have enabled greater links to be established between the Nursery and Reception classes. Outdoor provision has improved significantly. Staff have benefited from local authority support and training courses, but they now need to identify the most effective practice for pupils at Leigh Primary. In free play some areas of learning, such as writing and mathematics, do not attract as many children; as a result, their progress is not as fast. There is a good balance between child-initiated and teacher-led activity. However, some children's progress is being hampered by low level activities that do not challenge their thinking or develop their skills quickly enough. Links between the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 have been strengthened. Teachers have attended training together and there are improved transition arrangements.

Members of the leadership team continue to monitor the work of teachers but there is now a greater focus and emphasis on pupils' progress and their learning. Improvements to the assessment and tracking system have enabled teachers to identify more rapidly pupils who are underachieving. As a result, teachers are now able to identify variations in pupils' progression rates and provide intervention programmes or focused teaching to tackle slow progress. Through the Intensifying Support Programme, senior leaders coach teachers and enable them to undertake peer reviews. This has improved the accuracy and quality of monitoring and the quality of information about pupils' progress. Subject leaders, however, do not have enough leadership time to be able to have an accurate view of pupils' progress and the impact of initiatives. This also results in a lack of time to synthesise the school's data to make improvements which will have a rapid impact on standards. The local authority has worked well with the school to build capacity. Senior leaders have a more accurate self-evaluation of the school's strengths and areas for development.

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

Yours sincerely

Allan Torr  
Her Majesty's Inspector