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22 July 2008

Mrs Stringer  
The Headteacher  
St Luke's CofE Primary School  
Spire Hollin  
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Derbyshire  
SK13 7BS

Dear Mrs Stringer

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 15 July 2008, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during my visit.

This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website.

As a result of the inspection on 3 July 2007, the school was asked to raise standards in information and communication technology; improve the progress made by middle attaining pupils; develop the work of the senior management team and subject coordinators in monitoring pupils' standards, the quality of provision and in strategic planning; improve the systems for tracking of pupils' progress, setting challenging targets and using assessment to better inform planning; ensure that all statutory requirements are met and that governors take a full and active part in monitoring the school's work, in holding the school to account and for strategic planning, particularly financial planning.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time the school is making satisfactory progress. Systems are in place to check the quality of teaching and learning. These are now being used to identify where aspects of the school's work need to be improved further in order to make the school's overall effectiveness as good.

Since the last inspection the school has improved information and communication technology (ICT) equipment. Staff have received training and there is a concise three year plan in place. Children now have more opportunities to use computers and other ICT equipment, resulting in improvements the curriculum. ICT work completed by children has been collated but as yet there has not been any evaluation of the standards children are attaining in ICT or the amount of progress they are making. However, there are plans to do this in the near future.

The work of the senior management team (SMT) has been focused on improving the school. SMT members talk positively of how the headteacher has initiated changes that have helped them to be more evaluative. The SMT meet regularly, discuss priorities and outline action. There is a clear determination to highlight both what the school does well and where further improvement is needed. This has led to detailed evaluations of the progress made on the key areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. An example of the challenge provided by the SMT is the regular meetings between the headteacher and individual staff to discuss children's progress and strategies to accelerate progress where it is needed.

A detailed monitoring and evaluation timetable has been drawn up that identifies when and where activity will take place, including the involvement of governors. Monitoring of teachers' planning and children's work has been undertaken by various members of the SMT and some subject co-coordinators. During the inspection joint lesson observations were undertaken by the inspector and a member of the SMT. The senior manager's judgments of the lessons were spot on and the development points identified were equally appropriate. Subject coordinators now write action plans for their subjects that feed into the school improvement plan (SIP). Plans vary in detail and at times do not make explicit the measurable targets that could be used to judge progress. The SMT has made a good start in making targets more explicit in the SIP.

Systems for tracking children's progress have improved. There has been a focus on the progress children make in writing and mathematics, which has provided the school with useful data which has informed the actions of the SMT. Assessment data highlights inconsistencies. For example, in Year 5 the progress children made has slowed since February and a significant number have not achieved their targets. In contrast, there is more positive data which indicates that most middle attainers are making satisfactory progress. The progress of these children reflects the success of the school's strategies to effectively deploy teaching assistants, the use of catch up strategies and the expectation that teachers should be accountable for the progress children make in their class. Assessment information is being used constructively to group children in some lessons according to their ability. It is also being used to identify groups of children who are not making as much progress as expected.

Governors have reacted very positively to the findings of the last inspection when governance was judged to be inadequate. A flurry of activity has led to governors being well placed to offer the school both challenge and support. The headteacher has worked in partnership with governors. There has been an increase in the amount of shared performance information which has led to governors being more confident in knowing how effective the school is. All statutory requirements are now met and there is a timetabled list of actions to ensure that this situation is monitored and maintained. Financial management has improved, partly due to subscription into the services of the local authority to help the school set and manage the budget. A large underspend has now been used to improve the building, resources and to fund extra staff. Plans are in place to spend any remaining surplus on the priorities identified in the school improvement plan. Governors are very confident in the leadership skills of the headteacher and recognise that to continue to support the SMT they should hold the school to account in order for it to improve further.

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

Yours sincerely

*Andrew Cook*

Her Majesty's Inspector