

CfBT Inspection Services T 0300 1231231
Suite 22 enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
West Lancs Investment Centre www.ofsted.gov.uk
Maple View
Skelmersdale
WN8 9TG

Direct T 01695 566934
Direct F 01695 729320
gtunncliffe@cfbt.com
www.cfbt-inspections.com



4 February 2011

Mr A Baird
Headteacher
Foxfield School
Douglas Drive
Moreton
Wirral
Merseyside
CH46 6BT

Dear Mr Baird,

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools: monitoring inspection of Foxfield School

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 8 February 2011, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during the inspection. Please express my thanks to all staff and pupils for their warm welcome and help during my visit.

There have been very few significant changes to the context of the school since its inspection. A deputy headteacher returned from maternity leave in February 2010, which brought the senior leadership team back to its full complement.

As a result of the inspection on 15 October 2009, the school was asked to address the most important areas for improvement which are set out in the annex to this letter.

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.

Pupils across the school are achieving well, although their attainment is low as a result of their complex learning difficulties and/or disabilities. They make good progress, especially in developing independence and acquiring the knowledge and skills that prepare them well for the future and living in the community. Pupils' progress is assisted by their good attendance, good behaviour, enjoyment of school and enthusiasm for learning. In each lesson, they are settled; they confidently contribute, concentrate and sustain effort for the full lesson. Good attitudes to learning reflect the often good quality of teaching seen in lessons and a curriculum which is well focused on pupils acquiring good basic skills and learning in ways that suit their capabilities. Moreover, teaching and the curriculum are well planned to meet the range of special educational needs and/or disabilities of pupils so that different groups progress as well as others.

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Leaders have embedded the collection, analysis and evaluation of data on pupils' progress effectively, which has given them the confidence to set challenging targets. Subject leaders and teachers are involved well in the analysis of data and take action where a need is indicated. Current analysis of pupils' progress shows the school is on track with its targets and is raising achievement. Close attention is paid to the performance of different groups of pupils and data show that the gap is closing between boys and girls. Leaders' diligence ensures data are as accurate as possible. This has been achieved through moderation of teachers' assessment in school and with similar schools in Merseyside, which is a good source of external support. The school's subscription to a programme comparing its pupils' progress with similar pupils across England adds effectively to its perspective on school performance, increasing its capacity for action from the evaluations that tracking and comparison now provide.

Teachers and their assistants are effective in making learning engaging for boys and girls, often striking a good balance between pupils sitting listening and active learning. Teachers always use their interactive whiteboards with pupils. In a science-based topic, pupils collected rainwater in the sensory garden over one week to measure and compare with rainfall elsewhere in England, as well as places in India and Australia. Pupils found their discoveries exciting and measuring water was a challenge for them. While there is more scope for making learning practical, subject leaders have reviewed the curriculum and added guidance giving teachers opportunities to plan 'hands on' activities. This is not always reflected in lesson planning. Reading resources have been improved with fiction and non-fiction books for boys and further spending is planned in this direction.

Subject leaders are well established in monitoring and evaluation. They have a good understanding of strengths and weaknesses in their subjects, leading to systematic improvement. This has resulted in the remedying of slow progress in some aspects of mathematics in Key Stage 4 with the introduction of a new curriculum. In English, provision for communication has been improved through strengthening the partnership between teachers and the speech and language therapist. Subject leaders are also playing a key role in planning training opportunities for staff, which is increasing and extending their expertise in meeting pupils' needs.

The senior leaders work effectively as a team and are well supported by subject leaders in school improvement. There has been a strong and successful focus on the areas for improvement from the inspection. Leaders ask themselves 'is progress good enough?' a question that underpins their drive to make the school more successful. This is now manifesting itself in their good use of data, the improvement in teaching and the curriculum and the better capacity of leaders to sustain improvement. Good support from external agencies has been instrumental in the school's improvement.

I hope that you have found the inspection helpful in promoting improvement in your school. This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

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Mr Alan Lemon
Additional Inspector



Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place on 15 October 2009

- Improve students' achievement by ensuring that the collection and evaluation of data on progress is used more effectively to challenge students to do their best.
- Increase the capacity for practical opportunities, including the use of new technologies, to increase the progress made by boys.
- Develop the contribution of middle leaders to increase the percentage of good and better teaching and learning.