

Suite 22  
West Lancashire Investment Centre  
Maple View  
White Moss Business Park  
Skelmersdale  
WN8 9TG

T 0300 123 1231  
Text Phone: 0161 6188524  
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk  
[www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

Direct T 01695 566934  
Direct F 01695 729320  
Direct email: [gtunncliffe@cfbt.com](mailto:gtunncliffe@cfbt.com)



10 November 2010

Mrs Tracey Caffrey  
Headteacher  
St Johns Primary School  
Teindland Close  
Benwell  
Newcastle-upon-Tyne  
Tyne and Wear  
NE4 8HE

Dear Mrs Caffrey

### **Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools: monitoring inspection of St Johns Primary School**

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 9 November 2010, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during the inspection. Please also thank the School Improvement Partner, teachers and pupils who gave up their time to talk to me.

Since the last inspection the headteacher left the school and the existing deputy headteacher was acting for a term before being appointed as the substantive headteacher in November 2009. A new deputy headteacher took up post in September 2010 and there is a new leadership team. Two other new teachers have joined the school since the last inspection. There has been a significant change in the pupil population of the school with a rapidly increasing number of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds joining the school. The majority of these pupils have little or no spoken English and, between them, speak at least seven different languages.

As a result of the inspection on 11 and 12 February 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.

September 2010



The school has responded positively to the issues identified at its inspection in February 2009. Despite the changing nature of the school the headteacher and senior leaders have identified the most appropriate actions to improve pupils' achievement in reading, writing and mathematics and these actions are having a positive impact on accelerating pupils' progress and attainment and in narrowing the gap between boys and girls. The school's data show that short sharp catch-up programmes, closely linked to pupil progress data, are enabling pupils to fill gaps in their knowledge and improve their attainment, especially in mathematics and reading. There are new and rigorous systems in place to follow the progress of all groups of pupils within the school. The procedures for pupils who have an identified special educational need have also been revised so that targets set are focused, achievable and very regularly updated. These pupils also have dedicated learning time within every week to work specifically on their targets, which is leading to improvement and raising their self-esteem.

Teaching and learning have improved and a higher proportion of good teaching was observed during the visit. Lessons are brisker and have better pace and challenge for all groups of pupils, especially the more able. There is a better match of activities to pupils' abilities through the increased use of assessment data to plan lessons which will move pupils on from their previous starting points. This has also improved pupils' behaviour in lessons because they are fully engaged for the whole session. In a mathematics lesson for the oldest pupils, the teacher involved all pupils in interrogating data in a line graph. This work was closely linked to work in science and all pupils were required to think and problem solve for the whole lesson. The teacher skilfully used questioning to involve pupils of different abilities in explaining their thinking and, as a consequence, the attainment of this class was above that expected for 11-year-olds.

The school's work to accelerate progress in writing has had slightly less impact because the use of assessment to plan learning and the next steps for groups and individuals is less well developed across the school. This is work in progress and the school has plans to review marking procedures for writing to identify specifically what each pupil needs to do to improve their work. Nevertheless, marking in writing has improved and pupils are given copious feedback about how well they have achieved in their work, although they rarely have an opportunity to respond to this feedback. There are plans in place to improve lessons where pupils match sounds and letters to help them with their reading and writing by grouping pupils by ability across the school.

The school has robustly tackled the low attendance of the majority of pupils and some persistent absentees through highlighting the link between attendance and attainment to pupils, parents and carers. A full-time Parent Support Advisor works relentlessly with families through letters, home visits and first-day-response phone calls to check on unauthorised absence. This work, alongside a raft of rewards and incentives, has raised attendance to broadly average for the majority of pupils and

has improved the attendance of a few persistent absentee families dramatically. During the visit pupils were well aware of the importance of good attendance and some pupils whose attendance had been low said they now love coming to school and enjoy their learning much more.

Senior leaders and the governing body work very closely together to identify actions for improvement. The new leadership team is fully involved in monitoring and self-evaluation through a rigorous programme of joint lesson observations, scrutiny of pupils' books, teachers' planning and pupils' progress meetings. These meetings are held half termly and leaders discuss with individual teachers the progress of individuals and groups within each class. Teachers are held to account for pupils' progress and they are fully involved in analysing data for individuals to identify any pupil who is underachieving and in formulating an action plan for improvement. Teachers feel valued and fully engage with the process and they share the senior leaders' high expectations. The headteacher is determined to seek out the best support for all pupils and this has led to the school withdrawing from the local authority support for pupils at the early stages of speaking English so that more appropriate in-house support using their own staff can be given. School data are already showing that the progress of these pupils is accelerating this term as they quickly develop their language skills and are better able to access the whole curriculum.

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

Joy Frost  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Annex**

### **The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in February 2009**

- Raise standards in reading, writing and mathematics in Key Stages 1 and 2.
- Ensure teachers make more effective use of assessment information to provide the correct level of challenge for all pupils, especially for more able pupils.
- Extend the range of incentives within school to encourage pupils to attend more regularly to assist their progress.
- Review the roles and responsibilities of leaders and managers and involve more staff in school improvement activities.