

PROTECT-INSPECTION

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14 March 2011

Miss Julie Tomlinson
Headteacher
Sitlington Middlestown Junior and Infant School
Cross Road
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West Yorkshire
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Dear Miss Tomlinson,

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools: monitoring inspection of Sitlington Middlestown Junior and Infant School

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 11 March 2011, for the time you gave to our phone discussion and for the information which you provided before and during the inspection. Please pass on my thanks to the Vice Chair of the Governing Body who gave time to meet with me and to the pupils for their friendly welcome.

Since the last inspection a new deputy headteacher and two Newly Qualified Teachers have joined the school and some staff have left. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are now accommodated in one classroom and the Year 1 classroom has been extended. New resources have been purchased for information and communication technology (ICT). During this inspection Year 6 were away on a residential visit.

As a result of the inspection on 14 and 15 September 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.

The progress of all groups of pupils is accelerating as activities in lessons have a clearer purpose which the pupils understand. At the end of Year 6 in 2010, attainment did not show a significant rise. However, the school's closer tracking of pupils' progress during this school year is pinpointing the gaps in their knowledge and skills more effectively. For example, the school has identified reading in Year 2 and mathematics in Year 6 as areas in need of greater focus. The school is noting which interventions are more successful, by making regular checks on their impact. The adjustments which are then made ensure a sharper match of provision to the pupils' needs. Consequently, achievement is improving steadily, particularly in mathematics, as teaching approaches become more consistent.

January 2011

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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

Progress across all year groups is also more even because of the greater consistency in teaching. There are increasing opportunities for pupils to show independence and the pace of lessons is quicker. Pupils collaborate more strongly as they work in groups. Teachers' use of questions is more effective and enables the pupils to explain how they have demonstrated the school's five priorities for effective learning. For example, the youngest pupils talk confidently about reflection and ambition as their aspirations grow.

All pupils now have targets and are increasingly challenged to meet them. Just occasionally, opportunities are missed for some pupils to reflect on how to improve their work. For example, in one lesson, the more confident pupils did not have time at the end to explore how to extend their skills in using bar graphs. Conversely, in another lesson, the less-confident pupils did not explore how they would overcome their difficulties with multiplication. All pupils' work is now marked regularly. This is proving increasingly effective, particularly where the next steps are clearly recorded for the pupils to follow up.

Pupils use ICT, including interactive whiteboards and computers, with growing frequency during English and mathematics lessons, in order to practise and demonstrate their skills. Pupils are increasingly enthusiastic about the more-exciting curriculum, especially as they have had the opportunity to influence the themes they follow, for example, linked to animals or to Harry Potter. Consequently, the curriculum reflects pupils' interests more closely and allows them to apply their skills in more relevant practical situations, such as calculating the size of animal cages or adding up the bill in the café. Changes to the curriculum are securing stronger foundations for later learning for pupils of all ages from the Early Years Foundation Stage to upper Key Stage 2.

The school's assessment and tracking of pupils' progress over time is increasingly accurate. Leaders' evaluations of lessons and the feedback they give to staff are improving the quality of teaching. These actions and a sharper focus on identified priorities are securing the school's improvement and are helping to build a better capacity for further sustained improvement. Staff and pupils share a clearer vision of how they wish learning to develop in the future and increasingly this is seen in practice in the classrooms. These improvements are driven mainly by the energy and commitment of the school's senior leaders. However, the local authority's school improvement adviser and the School Improvement Partner have provided effective support in moderating the school's evaluation of its improvement and in affirming the next steps in maintaining positive change.

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

Liz Godman
Additional Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in September 2009

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning in Key Stage 2, particularly in mathematics, by:
 - increasing the level of expectation and challenge
 - using assessment information to set pupils' targets
 - ensuring that pupils understand how well they are achieving and what they need to do to improve their work
 - improving the quality of marking
 - developing a consistent approach to the teaching of mathematical calculation.
- Develop and extend the curriculum by:
 - ensuring that curriculum planning systematically develops a full range of skills, including the use of ICT, that contribute to pupils' future economic well-being.