

PROTECT-INSPECTION

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Thursday 14 July 2011

Mrs L Etchell
Headteacher
Whiston Junior and Infant School
Saville Road
Whiston
Rotherham
South Yorkshire
S60 4DX

Dear Mrs Etchell,

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

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 13 July 2011, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during the inspection. Please pass on my thanks to the pupils, your School Improvement Partner, the acting Chair and members of the Governing Body.

As a result of the inspection on 14 January 2010, 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 satisfactory progress in making improvements and satisfactory progress in demonstrating a better capacity for sustained improvement.

Since the last inspection the school has experienced significant changes. Following the departure of the headteacher, midway through the summer term in 2010, interim arrangements were made to secure the leadership of the school. A substantive headteacher took up post in September 2010. A newly appointed deputy headteacher will take up post in September 2011. Following the resignation of the previous Chair, the governing body operates with interim, 'acting' arrangements until their next meeting in September 2011.

The school's progress in making improvements is no better than satisfactory because little was achieved during the nine months following the previous inspection to remedy the weaknesses identified. The new headteacher's arrival in September 2010 brought with it a sense of urgency to tackle the areas for improvement. Since there was much to do, she sensibly directed her energies to tackling the most pressing issues in raising attainment in Year 6. At the same time, she enlisted the assistance of the local authority in dealing with a number of previously undetected major issues. These have been resolved successfully so that the school is now back on track and dealing more broadly with the areas for improvement.

January 2011

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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

The school is developing a more accurate tracking system to monitor the progress of all pupils from the Early Years Foundation Stage through to Year 6. This information is used by some, but not all, teachers in their lesson planning. Pupils who benefit from such focused planning make better rates of progress than their peers in other classes. Assessment and tracking information is used at half-termly pupil progress meetings to hold individuals to account for the achievements of pupils in their classes. However, currently this information is not linked to monitoring of teaching and learning nor is it discussed openly amongst all staff.

Indications from the school's recently developed pupil tracking systems are that, overall, pupils are now making more accelerated rates of progress than they were at the last inspection. Rates of progress for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are similar to those of their peers. Better progress is evident in reading and the same is true for most pupils in their writing. Progress is less marked in mathematics throughout the school and this is certainly the case for pupils in Year 6. Indications from unvalidated national test results for pupils in Year 6 this summer reveal improvements in attainment in reading and writing, with more pupils attaining the higher level 5 than in previous years. However, improvements in mathematics are more limited. While there has been an improvement in the proportion of pupils in Year 6 attaining the higher level 5, those attaining the expected level 4 remains as it was last year.

A rigorous system to monitor and evaluate the quality of teaching and learning is now established throughout the school. Following lesson observations by senior leaders, class teachers are provided with points for development. At the same time, the school is able to identify common weaknesses and remedy these. For example, from September the whole school will be adopting a common lesson-planning format which builds on the strengths of those classes where more accelerated progress is being made. Indications are that more elements of good teaching are consistently present in the majority of lessons across the whole school. For example, pupils in the Year 6 class are given opportunities to understand how to improve their work through the use of target mats. Opportunities for pupils to develop their independent learning skills are to be implemented from September 2011 through a redesigned curriculum.

Subject leaders for English and mathematics receive good support and guidance from the local authority. Their role is being developed to include lesson monitoring, work scrutiny and moderation of assessments so that they are increasingly aware of the achievement of pupils in their particular subjects. Monitoring the impact of intervention programmes for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is proving successful in targeting support more accurately and effectively. The school is working with the local authority through the 'Good Schools' initiative to develop the roles of senior leaders further.

The new headteacher brings a great deal of experience and expertise to the school. For example, from September, school development planning will be a single document, focused on outcomes for pupils and with much tighter timescales for completion. The headteacher's

determination to bring about the much-needed improvement is shared by all. Following intensive and effective training by leaders from partnership schools and the local authority, the governing body is now in a much stronger position to both challenge and support the school. This is particularly the case in their understanding and integration of the RAISE online data. A combination of the resolve of the new headteacher and very recent developments in tackling weaknesses indicate that the school currently demonstrates a satisfactory capacity to bring about the remaining improvements required.

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

James Kilner
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place on 14 January 2010

- Improve the quality of teaching in order to accelerate rates of progress by all pupils to ensure they reach their full potential by:
 - using assessment information more effectively to make certain that the work set in all lessons accurately matches the needs of pupils of all abilities
 - developing pupils' independent learning skills.

- Share leadership responsibilities more effectively in order to maximise the impact of priorities for school improvement