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15 July 2011

Mrs C Cope
Headteacher
Christ Church CofE VA Junior School, Sowerby Bridge
Park Road
Sowerby Bridge
West Yorkshire
HX6 2BJ

Dear Mrs Cope,

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools: monitoring inspection of Christ Church CofE VA Junior School, Sowerby Bridge

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 14 July 2011, for the time you gave to our phone discussions, planning meeting and for the information which you and your senior leadership team provided during the inspection. Please pass on my thanks to the Chair of the Governing Body, the School Improvement Partner and the group of pupils who took time to speak with me.

As a result of the inspection on 4 March 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.

In 2010 attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 in mathematics improved to be broadly in line with the national average and was above the school's target. However, attainment in English declined to below the national average. Early unvalidated results of the 2011 national Key Stage 2 tests show that attainment in mathematics has been sustained and the proportion of pupils achieving the higher levels has improved. However, attainment in English has continued to decline. Although pupils' attainment in reading is broadly in line with the national average, performance in writing is weaker and the school has acknowledged this as an area requiring concerted improvement.

The overall quality of teaching and learning has improved since the last inspection and the teaching seen in lessons was good. Lessons have clear learning objectives and criteria for achieving success which are shared with pupils. Where this is most effective pupils are involved in shaping and developing these as the lesson progresses, helping them to use and apply their skills in new areas of learning. However, the use of success criteria is still developing and teachers and pupils do not refer to these enough during lessons to check whether they are being met.

January 2011



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

Pupils are well engaged in lessons and are motivated to learn. They enjoy educational visits and practical activities which help them apply their learning. For example, they particularly enjoyed flying kites they had made as part of a science lesson on forces. Pupils' behaviour makes a strong contribution to their learning. They cooperate well and talk and share ideas purposefully and sensibly. The progress seen in lessons indicates an improving picture; however, this is yet to be demonstrated consistently in the school's data. Guidance given to pupils to improve their basic skills is positive. However, marking of pupils' work and written feedback on the next steps pupils need to take is variable. The school acknowledges this is an area for further improvement and is identified in the school improvement planning.

The school has worked successfully to ensure that all teachers have a secure understanding of the features of good teaching and learning. All staff contribute to the monitoring of the school's work, for example, in planning and support for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Presently, only the headteacher observes lessons. However, the school acknowledges that improvement planning needs to be further developed by ensuring that sharper measurable criteria are used to aid accountability and challenge from the governing body. Systems for tracking pupils' progress and monitoring the quality of teaching are becoming embedded but incisive evaluation of this information is an area for further development.

Support and monitoring by the School Improvement Partner has identified correctly the areas in which the school has made progress and those that require further improvement. School leaders and members of the governing body are aware of the need to review their priorities in the light of the school's recent Key Stage 2 results for writing.

The school is developing the role of leaders and has recently appointed a deputy headteacher. Together with partnerships being established with other local schools, this is enabling the school to increase its capacity to improve further and support the headteacher's drive for further 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

Mr Adrian Guy
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place on 4 March 2010

- Improve the quality of teaching and use of assessment in order to accelerate pupils' progress by:
 - making certain that all lessons have precise and appropriate learning objectives and clear criteria to achieve success
 - ensuring that all lessons motivate pupils and encourage them to use and apply their skills and knowledge providing clear strategies and guidance for pupils to improve their basic skills throughout all their work.

- Improve the planning for the school's future improvement by:
 - establishing clear criteria for the best practice in all major areas of the school's work, especially the quality of teaching and learning
 - involving staff at all levels in efficiently and rigorously monitoring and evaluating the school's work in order to achieve the agreed criteria