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4 November 2011

Mrs Cowgill
Headteacher
Hawthorn Primary School
Park Close
Westgate
Newcastle-upon-Tyne
Tyne and Wear
NE4 6SB

Dear Mrs Cowgill

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools: monitoring inspection of Hawthorn Primary School

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 3 November 2011 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 teachers and pupils who gave up their time to talk to me.

Since the last inspection no teachers have left the school and one newly qualified teacher has been appointed to work in the Reception class. The deployment of teaching assistants has been completely revised and two teaching assistants have left the school. A trainee Educational Psychologist has been employed to work one day a week in the school for two years and the family support worker is now employed full time by the school and is a member of the senior leadership team. The number of pupils on the school roll is increasing steadily.

As a result of the inspection on 6 July 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 good progress in making improvements and satisfactory progress in demonstrating a better capacity for sustained improvement.

Senior leaders have made a concerted effort to focus their work on raising pupils' achievement across the school. As a result of revisions to the way pupils are grouped for lessons, attainment in reading, writing and mathematics is improving rapidly at the end of both key stages. In the 2011 end-of-Year 2 assessments, writing improved significantly to be in line with national expectations for the first time. The school's tracking data show that an increased proportion of pupils are making accelerated progress in their learning in all classes, especially in writing and mathematics, and this improved progress was evident in pupils' books.

September 2011



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

During the inspection pupils were well engaged in their learning, eager and willing to answer questions and able to work independently on the tasks set. This is due to a better match of activities to pupils' abilities and new groupings where pupils of similar ability work together. In a 'sounds that letters make' lesson for the younger pupils, where they were learning to recognise new sounds and using them to read and write new words, the lesson progressed at a rapid pace. Every child was involved for the full period, learning new sounds with rhymes and actions and recapitulating previous learning. The teacher used the interactive whiteboard to good effect to enable pupils to segment unfamiliar words and then all pupils had the opportunity to practise their writing and spelling. This lesson was lively and enjoyable and enabled pupils to make rapid progress.

Due to the revised groupings senior leaders have further developed the curriculum to give pupils a wide range of new experiences and visits to local areas of interest which are closely linked to opportunities for pupils to write in other subjects than English and practise their basic skills. For example, in a pirate themed writing lesson for lower ability Key Stage 2 pupils the teacher dressed as a pirate and stayed in role for the whole lesson. This motivated pupils to improve their writing of pirate stories and stay focused on the task. Classrooms visited were lively, stimulating and engaging and teachers have created improved environments for learning across the school. They use a raft of innovative stimuli to keep pupils engaged including: role play and drama, puppets, the outdoor classroom and video clips. The pupils from the ARC behaviour unit were engrossed in building a campfire to test a stand they had made to support a cooking pot. This improved their ability to work cooperatively and to improve their self-esteem.

The deputy headteacher is driving the improvements in assessment and the use of assessments to plan learning. There is evidence of improved independent learning across the school in the classrooms visited where pupils settle quickly to tasks and stay focused until the task is finished. Improvements put in place to develop marking across the school were evident in pupils' books. Teachers are making comments which tell pupils the next steps in their learning and they have opportunities to respond to these comments and edit and improve their work. Sometimes the teachers' comments are not specific enough about what exactly the teacher wants the pupil to improve. The use of data to plan catch-up sessions and to identify which pupils need more support has improved. Teaching assistants were observed working directly with small groups of pupils or in one-to-one sessions for the majority of their time and this is helping to move these pupils' learning forward. There are however missed opportunities sometimes to use this information effectively to plan the next piece of learning as opposed to planning the next activity.

Senior leaders have tackled the low attendance evident in the last inspection as a matter of urgency. They have raised the profile of the links between attendance and attainment with parents and carers. The school has instigated rewards for 100% attendance and punctuality for pupils, parents and carers which have been well received. There are attendance displays, stickers and newsletters, as well as termly traffic light attendance letters which are sent home to every family, all of which are keeping attendance high profile. The family support

worker knows families well and is rigorous in following up absence and lateness. Senior leaders have refused to sanction holidays in term time and they work closely with outside agencies to support families to improve individual pupils' attendance, resulting in attendance improving rapidly to be in line with the national average, with a significant decline in persistent absenteeism.

Senior leaders have taken on more responsibility for whole-school initiatives and are fully involved in monitoring and evaluating the work of the school. There are improvements in the way they use data to check how well pupils are doing and in monitoring that planned improvements are taking place. The recently revised school development plan, however, has a lack of focus on pupils' outcomes and this makes evaluating the effectiveness of some planned actions difficult. There are missed opportunities to focus the monitoring work more closely on what pupils are learning in lessons. Senior leaders have made good use of the School Improvement Partner to work alongside and support the deputy and assistant headteachers to improve their expertise in monitoring and this is an ongoing development. The school works closely with local authority personnel; especially in the provision for pupils with special educational needs where the school is seen as a model of good practice in the authority.

I hope that you have found the visit 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 on 6 July 2010.

- Improve attainment at both key stages by:
 - increasing the rate of progress made by all pupils so they achieve in line with their capabilities
 - continuing to reduce absence rates
 - ensuring that all teachers use the school's assessment information and their own knowledge of pupils' capabilities when planning lesson activities so that their learning needs, and their ability to learn independently in a range of contexts, are taken fully into account.