

23 January 2008

Mr A Staton
Headteacher
St Ann's Junior and Infant School
St Leonard's Road
Eastwood
Rotherham
South Yorkshire
S65 1PD

Dear Mr Staton

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 22 January 2008, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during my visit. I would like also to thank the vice chair of governors for the discussion time we had and the pupils I met, formally and informally, who were courteous and helpful.

Since the inspection of November 2006 the school has admitted an increasing proportion of asylum seekers and eastern European migrants - many at an early stage in learning English. Some of these pupils have not attended school before even though they are older than the age by which they would normally attend school in this country. The numbers of pupils who join and leave the school during their primary education are high. Data show that on entry to the Foundation Stage children's skills and knowledge are very much lower than typically expected for their ages and lower than at the time of the last inspection. Many have very little or no English and low standards in personal development.

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As a result of the inspection on November 2006, the school was asked to:

- improve pupils' achievement, especially in mathematics;
- improve the quality of teaching and ensure that more is consistently good;
- ensure that information about individual pupils' progress is used to set tasks which fully meet their different needs;
- ensure that all arrangements for safeguarding children comply with requirements.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time the school is making satisfactory progress in addressing the issues for improvement and in raising the pupils' achievement.

Standards are adversely affected by the many and increasing changes in school population as explained above. In 2007, the school's results in the national tests for pupils in Year 2 and Year 6 were significantly below average in all tested subjects. The progress made by Year 6 pupils during Key Stage 2 was in the bottom 10% of all schools. A scrutiny of work and data shows that standards of the current Year 6 are rising slightly from the previous year, in mathematics in particular. Year 6 pupils are on their way to meet challenging targets in mathematics in 2008 although may fall short of the higher target set in English. Pupils who attend the school from the Foundation Stage onwards mostly make better progress than those who join later in their primary education. Importantly, most groups of pupils make at least satisfactory progress. Pupils learning English as an additional language make good progress in acquiring English because of the additional support the school provides.

To further raise standards the school organises daily learning sessions for families. This is to help them understand how their children are taught and what children are expected to learn. Toddler groups and pre-nursery transition groups help children prepare for school life.

Pupils' progress is beginning to accelerate because alongside higher expectations from staff are improved arrangements for assessment. Tasks better meet the pupils' needs because lesson planning is mostly carefully graduated to accommodate the enormous range of abilities in each class. Senior leaders and class teachers track the information on individual pupils' progress carefully. Teaching staff are increasingly held to account for the progress made by pupils in their class. Individual targets in reading, writing and mathematics mean that pupils usually know what they have to do to succeed and say that this helps them to improve. On the whole, it is too early to see the full impact of these arrangements.

Pupils receive extra teaching in small groups in mathematics and literacy to help them catch up with their class mates. A focus on speaking and listening underpins the school's work. Officers from the local education action zone and the local authority provide a sound range of support. Termly action plans set a clear agenda for improvement, although the arrangements for monitoring and evaluation lack clarity. The use of quantifiable data to judge success is developing.

Changes in the staffing profile since the last inspection include five staff new to their current year groups, three newly qualified teachers and other additional staff appointed. Arrangements to improve the quality of teaching and learning include the pairing of staff to give support, mentoring of newly qualified staff and changes to planning. Whole class teaching in mathematics rather than teaching in ability groups is giving more opportunities for pupils to use and apply their growing basic skills in a range of subjects. Scrutiny of lesson planning by senior leaders is helping to ensure a whole school approach to aid consistency. The direct monitoring of lessons gives an overall view of the quality of teaching and learning. However, the monitoring has yet to increase notably the proportion of good teaching and learning. This is because monitoring is not regular enough to make sure that the agreed policy on teaching

and learning is fully implemented. The monitoring does not check fully the first hand implementation of the plan to raise attainment. As a result weaknesses in the quality of teaching are not being addressed rapidly enough.

The employment of extra teaching assistants, some bi-lingual, gives good support to the teaching and learning. It is the pace of teaching and the expectations of staff that differentiate the satisfactory from the good teaching. When the pace is satisfactory rather than more rapid there is little sense of urgency and pupils often have unfinished work in their books.

Since the last inspection the school has gained various national awards. Working towards these has helped the school evaluate its work more thoroughly, for example, in checking pupils' progress in basic skills. Staff have benefited from training to help them become more accurate in assessing pupils' work.

Arrangements for safeguarding children now comply with requirements. Staff training is up-to-date and pupils have a good understanding of how to keep safe and healthy. Their very good behaviour and mature attitudes add a great deal to their learning.

I hope that you have found the visit helpful in promoting improvement in your school.

Yours sincerely

Mrs L Murphy
Additional Inspector