

CfBT Inspection Services
Suite 22
West Lancs Investment Centre
Maple View
Skelmersdale
WN8 9TG

T 08456 40 40 40
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk

Direct T 01695 566 933
Direct F 01695 729 320
julie.miller@cfbt.com

14 November 2008

Mrs Williams
Headteacher
Dearne Highgate Primary
Nicholas Lane
Goldthorpe
Rotherham
South Yorkshire
S63 9AS

Dear Mrs Williams

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 13 November 2008, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during my visit. Please pass on my thanks to the chair and vice-chair of governors, the representatives from the local authority (LA), and the staff and pupils with whom I spoke. They all helped me evaluate the progress the school is making.

Since the inspection in July 2007, there have been a number of significant changes within school. Two members of the leadership team have had extended periods of leave, one for maternity and one following an accident. During this period the assistant headteacher took on the acting headteacher role. Another member of staff has been on long-term sick leave. A new Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) leader has recently been appointed and is due to take up the position in January 2009. The school is currently undergoing a significant programme to extend classroom facilities as well as to refurbish the EYFS unit.

This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website. Please inform the Regional Inspection Service Provider of any factual inaccuracies within 24 hours of the receipt of this letter.

As a result of the inspection on July 2007, the school was asked to: improve the rate of learning in order to raise standards in English, mathematics and science; improve provision in the Foundation Stage; remove inconsistencies in the quality of teaching throughout the school; and improve attendance so that it is in-line with the national average.

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.

The 2008 unvalidated assessment results for Year 2 pupils and the school's own data indicate that standards in Key Stage 1 are improving significantly. Standards in reading have risen particularly well. Whilst remaining below average, standards in writing are now closer to the national average. Standards in mathematics have also improved, however, significantly fewer pupils than nationally are gaining the higher levels. The picture is less positive in Key Stage 2. The provisional national test results for 2008 indicate that the steep decline in standards by the end of Year 6 has been arrested and there has been some improvement, particularly in mathematics. However, the number of pupils gaining the higher levels remains below that which is expected.

The school's recently developed tracking system is being used with increasing effectiveness and clearly shows that the progress made in Key Stage 1 last year is being sustained. In some Key Stage 2 classes, however, progress is more limited and standards remain too low. Some pupils continue to make less than expected progress, particularly in English.

The school has taken positive action to support all teachers and further develop their skills. Supported by the LA, the quality and consistency of teaching is improving across the school. Based on more rigorous assessment, lessons are now planned to better meet pupils' needs and they include more active learning experiences. Pupils say that 'once lessons used to be quite boring, but now they are fun and exciting'. They also explain that behaviour has improved because, 'we don't just sit and listen, but are always doing exciting things'.

During my visit the EYFS was located in the main hall due to the programme of refurbishment. Staff have worked hard to ensure that this temporary learning environment is offering an appropriate learning experience. Whilst this has limited children's easy access to the outdoor learning area, careful planning enables all to enjoy this improving facility. The school has really benefited from the introduction of the new EYFS framework and key staff are finding the ongoing assessments of children's learning more manageable, robust and accurate. This helps teachers plan activities that better meet children's learning needs.

Since the time of the last inspection the school has adopted a number of successful strategies to improve attendance and it is now much closer to the national average. Attendance in some year groups, however, is better than in others. Last year, for example, attendance for Year 2 pupils was 97.2% and this is well above average. In contrast some lower Key Stage 2 classes only managed 91%, which remains too low.

The LA has been actively supporting the school, particularly helping to improve provision in the EFYS and supporting teaching and learning.

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

Yours sincerely

Jim Alexander
Additional Inspector