

8 October 2008

Mrs Janice Skelton
Headteacher
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Kelvin Grove
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Tyne and Wear
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Dear Mrs Skelton

Ofsted monitoring of schools with a notice to improve

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 07 October 2008, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during my visit. Please also pass on my particular thanks to staff, pupils and representatives of the governors and local authority (LA). Since the inspection in February 2008, there have been some recent staffing changes.

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 in February 2008, the school was asked to:

- Raise standards in Key Stage 2, particularly those achieved by higher attaining boys.
- Raise teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve.
- Improve the curriculum to provide more opportunities for pupils to acquire better basic skills in mathematics and science.
- Monitor and evaluate the school's performance more effectively and take prompt action to make the required improvements.
- Improve pupils' attendance.

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 school has responded positively to the issues identified at its inspection in February 2008. The school has effectively incorporated the areas for development into the school improvement plan and has adopted a more robust approach to improving standards. The school's own data and pupils' current work show that

standards are beginning to rise by the end of Key Stage 2, particularly in mathematics and science and for more able pupils. However, there is still a legacy of underachievement and work provided for some pupils is not always challenging enough to help them 'catch up'. There is still a significant gap between the achievements of girls and boys although the school is addressing this through improvements in the curriculum to engage boys further in learning. The quality of teaching and learning is improving and increasing the progress that pupils make in lessons, but the school is aware that there is still more work to do. Evidence indicates that pupils make satisfactory progress in Key Stage 1 from their low starting points. The school has taken steps to ensure that assessments are more accurate through the moderation of work and this is one of the reasons for the apparent dip in standards in Year 2.

There is an increasing awareness amongst staff that good quality teaching and learning is underpinned by a more effective and appropriate curriculum which addresses the needs of pupils. The teaching of mathematics and science has strengthened throughout the school and the curriculum has been re-designed to ensure that basic skills are taught appropriately and creatively through other curriculum areas. However, there is still work to do to ensure that tasks provided are increasingly more challenging as pupils' progress through the school. The quality of teaching and learning is variable, including within year groups. In the best lessons, teachers use assessment information effectively to target the individual needs of pupils and have high expectations of what they want pupils to achieve. Teachers consistently explain to pupils what they are to learn and what they have to do to achieve. There are good opportunities for speaking and listening through 'talk partners' and pupils are asked challenging questions to extend their thinking. These teachers have good subject knowledge and there is a brisk pace to the lessons which keeps pupils motivated and interested. Where teaching is less strong, work is undemanding and therefore pupils' progress slows.

The headteacher and the new leadership team are tackling the main issues facing the school effectively. All staff are now involved in assessing and moderating pupils' work, collecting data to inform the new tracking system and the school's self-evaluation. The tracking system is updated each term with the results of standardised tests and teacher assessments. The information is evaluated and used to plan further improvements. The school is using appropriate intervention programmes to ensure that any underachievement is rectified, often through the support of effective teaching assistants. However, most of these strategies are new and are not fully embedded: therefore, the full impact on pupils' progress is not yet evident. Where assessment is used well, data from the tracking system and day-to-day assessments are used to ensure that work is carefully planned to meet the needs of individuals and groups of pupils. However, this is not consistent in all classes and some pupils state that work is not always challenging enough for them. Pupils are increasingly involved in self and peer assessment: they have a good understanding of and are clearly focused on their targets for improvement. Marking is carried out in accordance with the school's policy and provides helpful guidance to

pupils on how they can improve their work. There are appropriate opportunities to respond to comments during the next lesson.

The governing body and senior leaders acted decisively to improve the monitoring role of all leaders within the school. A focused timetable for monitoring has been established which is carried out rigorously. There is now regular analysis of pupils' progress through the scrutiny of work and planning, as well as evaluation of assessment data. Lesson observations by the senior leadership team focus on the progress made by pupils and staff now have clear targets to improve the quality of their teaching. The governing body receives reports on a regular basis through the Raising Achievement Committee and consequently is better placed to challenge the school's performance. However, the reports do not always contain enough specific information to enable governors to challenge the school as effectively as they could.

Attendance levels have improved a little due to effective procedures put in place by the school but are still well below average. There are incentives to encourage pupils to attend school including class rewards each week and individual rewards at the end of the year. However, the rewards are not always 'immediate' and the school does not always follow up absences on the first day. The school is about to introduce a new scheme to rectify this. The educational welfare officer supports the school effectively in dealing with persistent absenteeism. Governors are also proactive in meeting the parents of persistent absentees to explain the impact absence has on the progress made by their children.

The school has taken every opportunity to benefit from the good support of the local authority (LA) in bringing about recent improvements. The LA has worked with senior leaders and governors to create a clear plan for improvement and is providing appropriate professional help. The school has kept parents well informed of any developments in the school since the last inspection.

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

Yours sincerely

Christine Inkster
Her Majesty's Inspector