

28 November 2008

Mr Tony Metcalfe
Headteacher
Clavering Primary School
Clavering Road
Hartlepool
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Dear Mr Metcalfe

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 27 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 staff, pupils, chair of governors, the National Leader of Education (NLE), and the representative from the local authority who took the time to talk to me during the visit.

Since the last inspection in March 2008 the senior leadership team has been restructured due to the retirement of three staff including the deputy headteacher. The governing body took this opportunity to appoint an experienced assistant headteacher who has responsibility for English and Key Stage 2 and make an internal appointment of an assistant headteacher for standards. Together with the headteacher and the assistant headteacher for the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), they form the new senior leadership team. The school has also appointed a newly qualified teacher. A headteacher from a local primary school has been supporting the school's work through the formation of a partnership between the two schools so that staff have benefited from the NLE school expertise and practice. The local authority has also appointed a 'Parents' Champion'.

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As a result of the inspection in March 2008, the school was asked to:

- Raise standards in writing in Key Stage 2
- Eradicate inadequate teaching in Key Stage 2 and improve the consistency of teaching in this key stage
- Improve school self-evaluation.

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.

Changes initiated by the school to improve writing across Key Stage 2 have been successful. 'The Big Write' initiative has been introduced in all classes across the school and as a result, standards in writing have improved. Provisional 2008 national test results show that standards rose in all subjects. In English, they were above average for all pupils and over 60% achieved the higher levels, exceeding their targets. The school has introduced short, sharp daily sound and letters sessions in all classes which are helping pupils to develop writing skills although currently these are not always appropriate for the higher ability pupils. More pupils are writing at the expected level for their age and many are exceeding the expected level. Pupils work on one piece of writing across the week developing their skills in writing for different audiences. They have a better understanding of what constitutes a good piece of writing and good marking of their work gives clear guidance on where they have succeeded and what they need to do to improve. Pupils told the inspector that they enjoy writing and that they know how to improve their work because they have clear targets to work towards. However, evidence from books and wall displays shows that there are still common mistakes in spelling which are going unchecked and targets set are not always followed up in the next piece of writing or are too broad.

Teaching and learning has improved. All teaching seen during the visit was satisfactory and over half was good or better. Common systems for learning have been established so that pupils know what they are going to learn in lessons and how to achieve their learning objectives. The best lessons have a brisk pace with many opportunities for pupils to talk together, work in pairs and groups and assess for themselves how well they have achieved. Teachers have high expectations of what pupils can do and instructions are very clear. The use of drama and interactive whiteboards is engaging pupils in their learning and acting as good stimuli for writing. Individual whiteboards are used well to enable pupils to record quickly their ideas and feedback to the rest of the class so that all pupils are fully involved. Teachers have good questioning skills and organise the learning so that activities meet the needs of pupils of different abilities. In satisfactory lessons, pupils are not given enough thinking time or time for reflection. Teachers move too quickly from one idea to another and opportunities for pupils to write at length are missed. Activities for more able pupils sometimes lack sufficient challenge. Pupils' behaviour is exemplary and they work diligently and with enthusiasm, eager to share their ideas with the teacher and the class.

Leadership and management have been strengthened by the restructure of the leadership team and the appointment of new governors. The headteacher is well supported by the new leadership team. Together they have developed systems to monitor and evaluate their work which involve all staff. They have a regular timetable of monitoring which includes lesson observations as well as scrutiny of planning and work in pupils' books. Feedback on lesson observations gives clear areas for development but is not yet sufficiently focused on how to improve pupils'

progress. Monitoring by the leadership team is carried out regularly and the assistant headteacher with responsibility for standards is rigorous in ensuring that all teachers are accountable for the progress of pupils. New tracking systems are identifying pupils who are falling behind or who need extra targeted intervention and teachers use this data well to deploy teaching assistants to support these pupils. The outcomes of monitoring are closely linked to performance management which ensures that improvements to standards and achievement are the main focus of the school's work. Currently the school is in the first cycle of evaluating how successful planned actions have been and is using data to identify which actions have had the most impact. The leadership team has an accurate view of what it still needs to do to improve: it is at the early stages of recognizing what has had the most impact enabling planning to be revised accordingly. The governing body has undertaken training from the local authority to develop skills in monitoring the school's work. Governors have specialist roles and visit the school regularly to meet with staff and discuss how well things are going. They are beginning to ask challenging questions and have developed a shadow action plan and a monitoring timetable to help them to focus more acutely on the areas for improvement.

The action plan developed by the local authority has helped the school to broker the support it needs to improve. Linking the school with another local school has been beneficial as staff have had many opportunities to observe good practice and incorporate this into their own teaching. The headteacher of the partnership school has supported the headteacher and the leadership team very well in developing appropriate systems to enable them to check that their planned actions are having the desired impact. Consultants from the local authority have worked alongside staff to improve teaching and planning especially in writing. The appointment of a 'Parent Champion' has enabled improved communication between parents and the school. She meets regularly with parents outside of the school to listen to their concerns and arranges meetings where appropriate. As a consequence, parents' confidence in the school has been restored. The school is on track to meet the improvement targets that it has set.

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

Yours sincerely

Joy Frost
Her Majesty's Inspector