

12 June 2009

Mr C Newby  
Headteacher  
Ravenshall School  
Ravensthorpe Road  
Thornhill Lees  
Dewsbury  
West Yorkshire  
WF12 9EE

Dear Mr Newby

#### Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 11 June 2009, for the time you gave to our phone discussions, and for the information which you provided before and during my visit. I would also like to thank the governors for the discussion we had, and the pupils I met who were very welcoming and helpful. I appreciated the opportunity to talk with other members of the leadership team and the school improvement advisor.

The school amalgamated shortly before the last inspection. Staffing at the school has remained stable since the inspection and there has been a significant fall in the rate of staff absence. The proportion of pupils with severe and complex needs continues to rise especially in Years 1 to 7.

As a result of the inspection on 5 and 6 June 2008, the school was asked to:

- improve the quality and consistency of teaching and learning in order to raise pupils' achievement
- ensure that teachers make better use of the information gained from assessment to set work which is matched to the learning needs of individual pupils
- improve the quality of support and guidance so that pupils know their specific learning targets and understand how to achieve these
- improve the knowledge and skills of middle managers and subject leaders to enable them to carry out their duties more effectively.

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

Since the previous inspection there has been considerable emphasis given to the professional development of staff. As a result of this, along with a far more rigorous approach to collecting information about pupils' achievements, the quality and consistency of teaching is improving. This is reflected in pupils' learning and achievement, though there are still a few inconsistencies. Specialised training and support by the local authority has enabled teachers to confidently provide work that is a better match to individual learning needs and styles. Achievement for pupils in Years 1 to 6 is improving well in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. Six months ago, leaders recognised that pupils' progress in information and communication technology was not as good. As a consequence of improved knowledge on the part of staff, achievement in this subject is now improving on a par with the other core subjects. Achievement in Years 7 to 11 is also improving, though not as strongly in writing and science. However, pupils are making considerable progress in improving their reading skills. The introduction of a commercially produced computer package has been especially successful in engaging reluctant readers. Pupils' success in reading is helping their progress in other subjects. The range of national awards for Years 10 and 11 has been extended to match pupils' abilities, needs and interests and now prepares them better for life after school.

Alongside the improved systems for assessing and recording pupils' achievements, staff are becoming increasingly skilled at measuring the progress of individuals and groups of pupils. Teachers have become more accurate in matching pupils' attainment to national standards, though leaders recognise more work is needed in this area. The planning of lessons follows on from how well pupils have done in their previous work and provides activities that are challenging to pupils of differing capabilities. This is accelerating the rate of progress for all pupils.

The school's efforts to provide pupils with helpful guidance about how to improve their work are paying dividends. All pupils have individual targets for literacy, numeracy and for their social development. The majority of pupils know what they have to do to increase their rate of progress. In the best lessons, in addition to the learning objectives, pupils are reminded of their individual literacy and behaviour targets, and this accelerates learning. Teachers mark pupils' work conscientiously giving praise where it is due, but leaders recognise that the use of comments to guide pupils in the next stage of their learning is still inconsistent.

Leaders and managers from the amalgamated schools have settled well into post and present a cohesive team. Work with the local authority project team, together with an overhaul of responsibilities, has transformed the leadership and management of the school. As a result, the school is now running more effectively on a day-to-day basis, giving members of the leadership team more time to devise robust systems and arrangements to drive school improvement. This is paying off in

the raised achievement of pupils. Furthermore, it has presented a positive model for the school. Following the example of leaders, staff from the amalgamated schools have come together well and are taking on whole school responsibilities willingly. Governors continue to give good support and provide challenge in holding the school to account. Subject leaders' reports to governors are more succinct, though some tend to be descriptive rather than evaluating the strengths and areas for improvement in their department.

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

Yours sincerely

Katharine Halifax  
Additional inspector