

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 566930
Direct F 01695 729320

8 December 2009

Mrs S Barton
Headteacher
Ecclesfield Primary School
High Street
Ecclesfield
Sheffield
South Yorkshire
S35 9UD

Dear Mrs Barton

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 7 December 2009 and for the information which you and they provided before and during my visit. Please pass on my thanks to the chair of governors for talking with me and to the pupils for making me feel so welcome.

As a result of the inspection on 9 and 10 June 2008, the school was asked to:

- raise standards and accelerate pupils' progress in English, mathematics and science in Years 3 to 6
- ensure that teaching is consistently challenging for all pupils to enable them to learn to the best of their ability
- develop the role of subject leaders and governors so that they are more involved in evaluating the school's performance and helping to raise standards
- strengthen the partnership between home and school to further enhance pupils' learning and parents' involvement in the life of the school.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time the school has made:

good progress in making improvements

and

good progress in demonstrating a better capacity for sustained improvement.



Provisional national assessments and test results at both Key Stages 1 and 2 are higher in 2009 than they were in 2008 in all subjects. At Key Stage 2 they are broadly in line with the latest nationally published figures in English, and are significantly above those for mathematics and science. These results indicate that the group of Year 6 pupils concerned made considerably better progress than had been made by Year 6 groups in previous years. A factor that has contributed to this is the much improved system for assessing pupils' attainment and tracking their progress. Considerable effort has been expended in moderating assessment to ensure they are accurate. The school uses the local authority designed computerised tracking system and now analyses resulting data much more thoroughly than previously. Senior leaders therefore have a clearer understanding of rates of progress across classes and of individual pupils. They are using the information to ensure appropriate action is taken to keep pupils on track to meet their challenging targets. As a result more pupils than before are making at least satisfactory, and often accelerated, progress. Despite this, pupils' progress is not yet entirely consistent across the school. Well-conceived action is being taken to tackle this, however.

A wide range of action has been taken to improve the quality of teaching. While it has not yet ensured full consistency, it nevertheless is having a positive impact on pupils' learning and progress. The detailed information about pupils' progress is helping to make teachers more aware of the impact of their teaching. They are using the information to plan tasks that are more closely matched to pupils' different needs and to promote appropriate levels of challenge, although this is not the case in all lessons. Pupils are being encouraged to become more actively involved in their own learning. They are being given more opportunities to learn through talking with others in pairs or small groups, developing their understanding through explaining their ideas and reasoning. This is often handled skilfully by teachers. Occasionally it is not conducted effectively, with, for example, pupils being allowed to spend too long talking with each other without the teacher giving input to correct misunderstandings or ensure that interactions between pupils are harmonious. Pupils are increasingly being involved in assessing their own and their peers' learning which is helping them to achieve a better understanding of how to improve their work. Senior leaders are increasingly aware of the strengths of individual teachers and where improvement would be beneficial, and are tackling this through specific training, coaching and support. This is in addition to training on general issues that are helping all teachers improve their practice.

The understanding and skills of subject leaders and their involvement in monitoring and improving the areas they are responsible for have strengthened considerably. Roles and responsibilities have been clarified. All now produce helpful plans detailing what action they intend to take, and they are held accountable for their effectiveness through regular line management meetings. There is now a clear and comprehensive programme for monitoring and evaluating activities in which all leaders are involved. In addition to this, some leaders carry out further specific monitoring activities, such as the recent reviews of mathematics and guided reading.



The experience and/or skills of subject leaders vary, but this is being tackled in a variety of ways such as increasing support through teamwork and one to one support and guidance. Governors are also more involved in monitoring the work of the school. They are increasing their knowledge of it through conducting activities such as learning walks. In particular, key governors have a better understanding of how pupils are progressing because of the more detailed information they receive about this, and so are sharpening up their understanding of the questions they need to ask senior leaders. However not all governors are yet equally knowledgeable.

Much work has taken place to improve communication with and information provided for parents so they can become more involved in school life and their children's learning. This includes fortnightly bulletins, regular newsletters and other information such as on what children are studying. There was considerable consultation over changes to the setting of homework. A parent partnership team has been established, a family learning coordinator has been appointed and there has been a successful launch of related activities. Some of these developments are relatively new but the positive impact of actions taken is seen in the responses to a recent questionnaire sent to parents to ask their views of the school. While not yet fully analysed, they nevertheless show that parents are more positive about the school than at the time of the previous inspection.

Through the above actions and their impact, the school is demonstrating a better capacity for sustaining improvement. The leadership team has been widened through new posts. Close working with local authority staff in the last few years on a variety of issues has helped to sharpen leaders' understanding and skills. While continuing to benefit from these helpful links, leaders are now operating autonomously and increasingly effectively. In particular, senior leaders are using their much improved understanding of how pupils are progressing and why to drive developments.

This monitoring visit included a check on the school's safeguarding procedures and found them to be secure and meeting current requirements.

I hope that you have found the visit helpful in promoting improvement in your school. This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Joan McKenna
Additional Inspector

