

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

09 December 2009

Mrs D Ashcroft
Headteacher
Regent Farm First School
Wansbeck Road South
Gosforth
Newcastle-upon-Tyne
Tyne and Wear
NE3 3PE

Dear Mrs D Ashcroft

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 8 December. I would also like to offer my thanks to the children and the vice-chair of governors, who took their time to speak to me during the visit.

Since the time of the last inspection there have been some changes in school staff. The deputy headteacher became the acting headteacher in January 2009, leading the school until the new headteacher took up position in September 2009. A newly qualified teacher was appointed in January 2009. As a consequence of a significant rise in the number of pupils attending the school, two additional teachers were appointed to teach the two new classes developed for September 2009. They took up their positions alongside two newly qualified teachers who were appointed at the same time.

As a result of the inspection on 25 and 26 November 2008, the school was asked to:

- make better use of assessment information to plan work that is consistently matched to the abilities of all groups of children
- develop a more creative curriculum to strengthen the learning of basic skills and pupils' involvement with the local community and the wider world
- ensure that self-evaluation is more rigorous and linked more closely to pupils' achievement.

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.

Lesson observations undertaken during the visit, analysis of school assessment information and outcomes of observations conducted by the headteacher indicate that pupils' attainment and progress in lessons in both the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 are good. Pupils' progress in lessons in Key Stage 2 classes is improving but the pace has been slower.

Children enter school with skills and knowledge that are below expectations for their age. The standards they attain by the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage are improving and are at least in line with national averages and mainly above local averages. At Key Stage 1, standards are also improving and are now similar to those found nationally; representing good progress given pupils' starting points. Key Stage 2 attainment has proved more stubborn to improve because of the past underachievement in Key Stage 1 and the number of changes of staff pupils experienced last year. Consequently, the percentage attaining age-related expectations by the end of Year 4 in summer 2009 was slightly below that of 2008. Nevertheless, regular tracking shows current Year 4 pupils are making better progress; more in line with that made in other year groups.

Pupils are making faster progress in their lessons because of improvements made to the curriculum and the quality of teaching, as well as teachers' more consistent focus on meeting pupils' differing levels of ability in their lesson planning and delivery. Pupils spoken to during the visit reported with enthusiasm on how much more fun lessons are. They report there are fewer supply teachers and appreciate the continuity to their learning that a more stable staff team bring. Regular use of accurate assessment information is making sure lessons are matched more closely to pupils' individual needs. In nearly all lessons visited, pupils worked on activities that were appropriate to their current levels of understanding with objectives set to help them improve further. However, occasionally this was not evident in teachers' planning; making it difficult to ascertain how well matched the varied tasks had been. Leaders are working conscientiously to iron out these few inconsistencies.

Good support is provided to those who face challenges in their learning or who find learning difficult through effective support, care and guidance from teachers and well-deployed teaching assistants. Because of the regular assessments, any underachievement is quickly identified and additional interventions put in place. Although there is some difference between the progress made by all pupils and some groups of pupils, for example, a few of those with a special educational need and/or disability, or a very small number of those who are in the early stages of developing English, good actions are taking place to narrow the gap.

The curriculum is improving. It is interesting, has breadth and variety and is well planned to extend pupils basic skills while aiming to increase their enjoyment and

achievements. Pupils spoken to during the visit were full of praise for the interesting activities provided within and outside of the school day. They relish opportunities to work with the variety of visitors to school. Basic skills are being embedded across a range of whole-school topics. This includes the use of information and communication technology (ICT). Pupils' skills in ICT are developing well. They tackle activities on the interactive whiteboard with vigour and enthusiasm and are quite accomplished from a very early age. The school continues to develop effective strategies to strengthen pupils' involvement with the local community and to involve parents in their children's learning. For example, through the involvement of parents in workshops with an author as part of the autumn term 'take one author' topic.

Self-evaluation is now more grounded in detailed and accurate assessment information about the attainment and progress of pupils and identified groups in the school. The determined and strong focus of the acting headteacher on improving self-evaluation and tackling the other recommendations identified at the time of the last inspection, together with good transition arrangements, has enabled the new headteacher to build successfully upon improvements made.

The leadership team make sure they have a good understanding of how well they are doing through assiduous evaluation of progress towards priorities within the post-inspection action plan. They have a very clear notion of their successes and what they need to do to improve further. Governance has improved and governors are developing better, more robust ways to challenge and support the school. Given the improvements in the Early Years Foundation Stage, Key Stage 1, better progress in Key Stage 2 and the successes in tackling the recommendations arising from the last inspection, the school has strengthened its capacity for sustained improvement.

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

Yours sincerely

Margaret Farrow

Her Majesty's Inspector