

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



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Mrs Sarah Creighton
Headteacher
The Hill Primary School
Tudor Street
Thurnscoe
Rotherham
South Yorkshire
S63 0DS

Dear Mrs Creighton

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools

Thank you for the help you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 25 February 2010, for the time you gave to our phone discussion and for the information you provided during my visit. Please pass my thanks on to your Chair of Governors and School Improvement Partner, who gave their time to come into school to meet with me. Please give my particular thanks to the pupils, who made me so welcome and who spoke to me so willingly about their work.

There have been a number of changes to the school's staff since the inspection in February 2008. Some staff have left and new staff have joined the school. The leadership team has been reorganised and a new deputy headteacher and a new assistant headteacher have been appointed. The school's premises have been redecorated and refurbished. The proportion of pupils entitled to free school meals has risen.

As a result of the inspection on 26 February 2008, the school was asked to:

- raise standards in English, mathematics and science throughout the school
- improve the quality of teaching so that it is at least good, particularly in relation to the pace of learning and the quality of information provided to pupils about how to improve their work
- sharpen the monitoring of teaching and learning so that strengths and weaknesses are more clearly understood.

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.



Pupils' achievement is improving. There are signs of a rise in attainment, particularly in reading and mathematics. Despite this, test results at the end of Year 6 in 2009 in English, mathematics and science remained low. Writing continues to be the weaker area. The school has identified this and is actively seeking strategies to improve the situation. Attainment in Key Stage 1 has improved over the last three years with a steady upwards trend in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils' progress is accelerating throughout the school. This is confirmed by the work of pupils in English and mathematics in Years 5 and 6. The range and amount of work completed is increasing for pupils of all abilities. In English the highest attaining pupils also write with growing fluency and produce a greater volume of well-presented work. However, the written work of many pupils continues to show weaknesses, particularly in spelling and presentation. Lessons are characterised by pupils' increasingly high levels of interest and eagerness to undertake the work set for them. This is helping them to practise and consolidate their skills. Pupils now expect to work independently and in groups and do so diligently and without prompting. Their aspirations have been raised and they now view themselves as capable learners, keen to succeed and to do their best.

The school has successfully increased the proportion of good and outstanding teaching. At the start of lessons all classes are much clearer about what they are going to learn. The pace and timing of lessons is better, with more interesting activities. For example, in Years 1 and 2 pupils excitedly tackled their writing, with the knowledge this was essential preparation for the arrival of the 'phoenix's egg'. Similarly, teachers' growing skills in making learning engaging mean that in Year 6 pupils tackle whatever is offered to them with greater enthusiasm, whether this is compiling a balanced argument about the merits of homework, improving a mystery story or calculating the area and perimeter of football pitches. The marking of pupils' work is better. There are considerably more opportunities for pupils to assess their own and others' work and to identify how it might be improved. This is now secure throughout the school and pupils take this responsibility very seriously and sensitively.

The improvements to teaching are underpinned by sharper monitoring and better use of the findings to develop practice further. Leaders are increasingly resolute in their drive to increase pupils' progress and to raise attainment. Evaluations are made of pupils' progress, with more timely intervention and review to prevent anyone from falling behind. Leaders have developed varied but systematic approaches to assessing the quality of teaching and use this assessment to follow up where improvements are needed. This includes a shared approach to work scrutiny which has proved effective in securing a more consistent approach to the marking of pupils' work. Governors receive regular and full reports of the monitoring activities. As a result, they are increasingly well informed and better able to provide support and challenge as required. Changes to the leadership structure have helped to ensure a wider involvement in monitoring and developing the school's work and

have contributed to a shared and more accurate understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in teaching and learning. This monitoring inspection included a check on the school's safeguarding procedures and found them to be secure and meeting current requirements.

The school's better capacity for sustained improvement arises from a clear vision about what can be achieved. This is driven by the senior leaders, and these raised expectations are shared by staff and governors. This is accelerating progress and ensuring learning is more secure. The long legacy of low attainment is gradually being overcome.

The School Improvement Partner has provided good support, with challenge to the school to be rigorous in its self-evaluation. She has encouraged leaders to identify and apply those approaches which will be suitable in securing improvement in the school's particular circumstances. The local authority has provided the school with the help it has requested. The school is also involved with a variety of networks and links, enabling the exchange of effective practice between a number of schools. This has promoted improvement in this school and more widely.

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

Liz Godman
Additional Inspector