

2 February 2010

Mr Faulkner
Bearbrook Combined School
Fowler Road
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HP19 7QP

Dear Mr Faulkner

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 26 January 2010, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during my visit. Please also pass on my thanks to the pupils and governors who spent time talking with me.

A new deputy headteacher was appointed from April last year and three newly qualified teachers started at the beginning of the Autumn Term. The school also has a new chair of governors in post since November 2008.

As a result of the inspection on 29 January 2008, the school was asked to:

- make better use of assessment to ensure that work is pitched at a sufficiently demanding level, brings greater pace to teaching and results in higher productivity for pupils
- provide more balance between direct teaching and opportunities for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage to make decisions about their learning, especially in outdoor play
- improve pupils' skills and knowledge in information and communication technology and provide more opportunities for them to use computers to support their learning in other subjects.

Having considered all the evidence, I am of the opinion that at this time the school has made satisfactory progress in making improvements and satisfactory progress in demonstrating a better capacity for sustained improvement.

The 2009 national assessments for Year 6 show broadly average attainment in mathematics and science. This represents satisfactory progress from pupils' starting points in Year 3 and an improvement on the previous four years. Attainment in English, however, was not as strong and was significantly below average. The school has rightly identified a need to improve literacy provision and has put in place appropriate curricular changes and interventions. The school's own accurate tracking

information shows these initiatives are beginning to make a difference. For example, the data show a substantial increase in the proportion of the current Year 6 pupils on track to attain the higher Level 5 in reading and writing this year.

Staff are busily adapting the curriculum in the Early Years Foundation Stage to ensure that learning flows freely between the indoors and outdoors. There are, however, still missed opportunities for children to make decisions about their learning and for adults to question them to extend their vocabulary and mathematical understanding. Nevertheless, the impact of the changes made so far presents an encouraging picture, with an increase in the numbers reaching the expected levels in all areas of learning by the end of the Reception last year.

The teaching we observed jointly was at least satisfactory and often included good elements. Lessons frequently start with a recap of the pupils' previous learning and provide opportunities for consolidation and reflection. Teachers are better at using assessment information to ensure that work is pitched at a sufficiently demanding level for different ability groups. As a consequence, many pupils are making accelerated progress to make up lost ground. However, these good features are not yet consistent in all lessons. The lesson observations made by leaders last year confirmed these observations and identified some aptly focused areas for further development.

Pupils confirm there are now more opportunities to use computers to support their learning. There are some good examples of the use of photographic software to enhance digital images and netbooks for research during lessons. However, more remains to be done. A detailed scrutiny of the curriculum is identifying opportunities where new technologies can make learning more challenging and fun.

The good leadership of the headteacher has enabled significant changes to be made to the way the school is managed. The newly formed senior leadership team shares his vision for improvement. Middle leaders and class teachers are increasingly effective. The improved systems for the regular and detailed monitoring of pupils' progress are providing staff with a clearer picture of what each individual can do. However, with a high proportion of new staff, more time is needed before improvement becomes fully embedded.

Local authority advisors and consultants have provided good support for school improvement which has been carefully tailored to meet the school's needs. Overall, there is now a shared vision for improvement and an ambition to succeed.

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

John Earish
Additional inspector