

Suite 22 West  
Lancs  
Investment Centre  
Maple View  
Skelmersdale  
WN8 9TG

T 08456 40 40 40  
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk  
[www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

Direct T 01695 566930  
Direct F 01695 729320  
e-mail [gtunncliffe@cfbt.com](mailto:gtunncliffe@cfbt.com)

13 May 2010

Mr A Knighton  
Shield Row Primary School  
King Edward VIII terrace  
Shield Row  
Stanley  
County Durham  
DH9 0HQ

Dear Mr Knighton

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 12 May 2010, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during my visit. I found our on-site preparation on the afternoon of the 11 May very useful. Please pass on my thanks to the School Improvement Partner, the local authority teaching and learning consultant and to the pupils and staff who spoke with me during the inspection.

The school is smaller than most primary schools and the number on roll is declining. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities fluctuates from year to year and it is currently well above average. The proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational needs is above average. Since the last inspection the school has faced significant staffing turbulence. During the inspection one teacher was absent from school, one teacher was on a phased return to school following a long absence and another teacher had been teaching her class for seven days.

As a result of the inspection on 20 May 2008, the school was asked to:

- ensure that the level of challenge in lessons is consistently high enough and meets the needs of all pupils
- increase the rigour in the school's monitoring and in assessing subsequent actions
- develop a more creative curriculum
- increase attendance.

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 school responded positively to the issues raised at the time of the last inspection. A range of strategies designed to improve teaching and assessment and thus improve pupils' progress was introduced but because of the significant staff absence new ways of working were not consistently embedded in all classes. As a result, the school did not improve rapidly enough in the months following the inspection. Pupils' attainment, as measured by national tests at the end of Key Stage 2, was below national expectations in 2008 and the school failed to make the hoped for improvements in 2009, although outcomes at Key Stage 1 improved in all subjects. In the past year the school's progress has accelerated. This is partly but not entirely due to the effective support provided by the local authority. A teaching and learning consultant spends three days each week in the school. She provides intensive support for individual teachers and works alongside the headteacher and deputy headteacher as part of the senior leadership team.

The headteacher has an accurate view of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. School self-evaluation is thorough and the school is firmly focused on improving pupils' progress. The school improvement plan identifies the most important priorities for improvement and makes clear how the impact of the actions taken will be monitored and evaluated. Middle and senior leaders are becoming increasingly skilled at improving some aspects of the school's work, for example, taking responsibility for improving the use of assessment in mathematics and improving partnerships with parents.

The school tracks pupils' progress rigorously and any underachievement is identified and tackled. Pupils are assessed regularly and teachers' assessments of pupils' progress have been moderated by the local authority. The school is confident that it has, for the first time, an accurate view of pupils' attainment. School tracking data show that there is still some underachievement but that an increasing proportion of pupils are achieving the levels expected for their age. The school has set challenging targets for all pupils and work seen during the inspection indicates that pupils are on track to achieve them. Any pupils requiring additional support are identified promptly and they are provided with effective support in lessons. The current Year 6 cohort is expected to attain better results than in previous years and the proportion of pupils attaining the higher Level 5 is also expected to rise.

Much of the teaching seen during the inspection was good and in lessons where teaching was satisfactory there were some strengths. Teachers plan lessons carefully. They use information from previous lessons to plan the next steps in pupils' learning. Lessons are interesting and pupils are usually provided with tasks that are well matched to their needs. Teacher talk is kept to a minimum and pupils are given ample opportunities to talk with a partner or complete a short task in order to consolidate their learning. This means that pupils, including those with special

educational needs and/or disabilities, make at least satisfactory and often good progress. Most teachers use questioning well to motivate pupils and to check on their levels of understanding. Many pupils respond well to this but in some classes pupils are reluctant to answer questions. In these lessons teachers do not always do enough to encourage pupils to participate. Pupils are responding well to new ways of working and they say that they enjoy lessons. They know their targets and talk confidently about the progress they are making. Older pupils are becoming increasingly evaluative and some are beginning to improve their work before it is marked by the teacher. The school has introduced an effective marking policy. Pupils' work is marked carefully and they are given clear guidance on what is going well and what they need to improve. Nearly all pupils have very positive attitudes to learning. A very small minority of pupils in one class that has been particularly hard hit by teacher absence have less positive attitudes. They do not always support their peers and sometimes disrupt the learning of others by shouting out. This is very unusual because the majority of pupils behave well and are courteous to their peers and to staff.

The school has, rightly, decided to ensure that teaching and learning are consistently good before introducing radical changes to the curriculum. Pupils are developing independent learning skills and lessons are often planned around cross-curricular themes. The school is coming to the end of a three year 'Connecting Classrooms' project. The school worked with two local schools and schools in Ghana and Mauritius. Pupils from Ghana have visited Shield Row and two pupils and their teachers visited Mauritius. This work has increased pupils' engagement with the wider community and promoted their understanding of other cultures. The school tracks pupils' attendance carefully and has a number of strategies to encourage better attendance. The school complies with all the latest safeguarding guidance and its register of such checks is up to date.

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

Christine Graham  
Her Majesty's Inspector