

CfBT Inspection Services T 0300 1231231
Suite 22 enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
West Lancs Investment Centre www.ofsted.gov.uk
Maple View
Skelmersdale
WN8 9TG

Direct T 01695 566934
Direct F 01695 729320
gtunncliffe@cfbt.com
www.cfbt-inspections.com



7 July 2011

Mrs S Tunn
Headteacher
Normanton Junior School
Church Lane
Normanton
West Yorkshire
WF6 1EY

Dear Mrs Tunn,

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools: monitoring inspection of Normanton Junior School

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 6 July 2011, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during the inspection. I also welcomed the opportunity to talk with staff, pupils, the School Improvement Partner and the teaching and learning consultant.

Since the previous inspection the number of pupils attending the school has risen from 263 to 284, requiring a move from two to three Year 3 classes from September 2010. Pupil numbers are set to rise further. An increasing number of pupils has joined and left the school at times other than the beginning of the school year. There are pronounced variations in the proportion of boys and girls, pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities in each year group. Two additional teachers have been recruited and will join the school in September 2011 to cater for the increased intake in Year 3 and reduce the number of pupils in Years 5 and 6 classes. There has been a 20% reduction in support staff time. The leadership team has been restructured, forming a strong platform for school improvement.

As a result of the inspection on 11 and 12 March 2010, the school was asked to address the most important areas for improvement which are set out in the annex to this letter. 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' attainment in English and mathematics at the end of Year 6 in 2010 was broadly average. This represented satisfactory progress for most pupils taking their starting points into account. More pupils attained the expected Level 4 than in the previous year, although the proportion of pupils attaining the higher Level 5 was below that expected. Reliable school data and externally-moderated teacher assessments for the current year indicate improving trends in pupils' individual attainment in both English and mathematics in each year group. This is because the pace of learning has picked up and rates of progress have

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accelerated. Consequently, more pupils are on track to attain the higher levels and to achieve their individually challenging targets. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are making similar rates of progress to that of their peers.

The school has implemented a range of strategies to improve pupils' punctuality. Start of day phone calls and home visits by the learning mentor, for example, have helped to reduce the number of pupils who consistently miss the start of the school day. Pupils' attendance has improved slightly but remains broadly average. Pupils' good behaviour makes a strong contribution to their improving progress and achievements and demonstrates their enjoyment of school.

Pupils have productive relationships with their teachers and each other and are eager participants in their own learning. Pupils are being provided with plenty of opportunities to work independently and in small groups and thoroughly enjoy being involved in assessing their own and each other's learning. For instance, in a Year 4 class, small groups of pupils were testing and evaluating the sports themed games and accompanying written instructions that other pupils had designed and made as part of their project work. They undertook this task with great sensitivity and made astute and well-reasoned observations about the extent to which the success criteria and learning objectives had been achieved.

The proportion of good or better lessons has increased substantially as a result of well-targeted actions and development activities for staff. Teaching observed was stimulating, it actively engaged pupils and resulted in good learning and progress. Lessons are generally being planned to provide activities that provide the right levels of challenge for pupils of differing abilities and to ensure that there are more opportunities for independent investigation and research. In a mathematics lesson, for example, the learning objective for all the pupils was to draw a comparative bar chart showing how many times they could throw and catch a ball in one minute. The task for the more-able pupils was made more complex by using a much harder scale to record their findings. Teachers build in plenty of opportunities to assess pupils' understanding and monitor progress during lessons and provide very comprehensive written feedback that ensures pupils can clearly identify their next academic steps. Pupils are effectively being helped to gain a much clearer understanding of the progress they are making through the clear, personalised targets in their books and the discussions they have with teachers about these. Strategies implemented to date to involve parents and carers in supporting their children's work at home have had limited success. Plans to engage parents more effectively from the start of the new academic year are currently being finalised.

Systems to track and assess pupils' attainment and progress have become much sharper throughout the school. This ensures that pupils' learning is closely-monitored and individual support can be put in place swiftly when needed. Staff are increasingly successful at identifying some very small and clearly-defined steps in learning that pupils may be lacking confidence in and that may halt future learning; for example, being able to use number bonds up to 20 or 100 in Year 3. Effective use of guided learning in small groups ensures

that pupils' understanding is quickly brought back on track and consolidated in as short a time as possible.

School leaders have driven forward improvement briskly. They have taken carefully-considered steps to ensure that the staff have moved with them and can reflect on what aspects of their own practice are resulting in improved outcomes for pupils. Consequently, morale is high and there is a strong sense of purposeful action throughout the school. Senior leaders know their school well and have a precise picture of what future actions are needed. Nevertheless, there is still some work to do to sharpen school plans so that they clearly indicate next steps, fully demonstrate the success of the actions taken by the school so far and spell out precisely what difference these have made for pupils. Systems to safeguard pupils meet current requirements. Support from the local authority, partner schools and the teaching and learning consultant have been good, effectively helping the school implement the actions needed to tackle the areas for improvement.

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

Yours sincerely

Dr Wendy Ripley
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place on 11 March 2010

- By 2011 raise attainment in mathematics by:
 - guiding pupils' learning in small groups so that they gain an increased understanding of the four rules of number
 - providing plentiful opportunities to record work independently
 - involving parents and carers in supporting their children's work at home
 - making good use of mathematics in as many other subjects as possible.

- By 2011 accelerate the pace of learning by:
 - gaining consistency in the quality of teaching so that all teaching is the best it can be
 - developing systems to track pupils' progress so that class teachers have more responsibility
 - personalising targets for pupils' next academic steps
 - improving punctuality so that pupils do not miss the start of the school day, when much learning takes place.