

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

Direct Tel: 01695 566932
Direct Fax: 01695 729320

www.ofsted.gov.uk



13 June 2006

Dr Watkinson
Headteacher
Dean Field Community Primary School
Cousin Lane
Ovenden
Halifax
HX2 8DQ

Dear Dr Watkinson

OFSTED MONITORING OF SCHOOLS WITH A NOTICE TO IMPROVE

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I visited your school on Wednesday 25 May, 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 particular thanks to those children and staff who met with me and to your chair of governors for the time he gave.

Having considered carefully all the evidence presented by the school and the local authority, I am of the opinion that at this time the school is making satisfactory progress overall on the issues identified at the last inspection.

As a result of its inspection in November 2005, the school was asked to: raise standards and achievement in English, mathematics and science, especially in Key Stage 2, by ensuring that teachers make the best use of assessment information to help target setting; ensure pupils' work is pitched at the right levels for all abilities, and check pupils' progress at regular intervals and step in quickly where more needs to be done.

The visit focused on these three aspects of the school's action plan, drawing on: information sent beforehand and available at the school; discussions with senior staff, middle managers, teachers, the chair of governors and pupils in Years 5 and 6; discussions with local authority officers; lesson observations and samples of pupils' work.

Much work has been put into gathering data to build a full picture of the progress of pupils. The school has devised more systematic monitoring of the achievements of vulnerable children which allows staff to share information and intervene promptly.

A new staffing structure has strengthened middle management with specific individuals having responsibilities for the progress of gifted and talented children, developing work in English and mathematics and for monitoring progress within each key stage. Initial work has been done on collating information held by teachers to more easily identify pupils who need urgent support. Information from teacher assessments and national optional tests is used to check pupils' progress and identify those who are falling behind and need more help or those who would benefit from more demanding work. Pupils spoken with knew that they had targets in English and mathematics and could point to the particular skills they were trying to improve. Pupils reported that they enjoyed trying to meet their targets and that teachers' comments on their work were helpful. They had also enjoyed the national tests and were enthusiastic about the accelerated reading programme.

To improve literacy and independent reading skills, the school is placing additional emphasis on the systematic teaching of the necessary skills at Key Stage 1 and also with older children who need help. In lessons seen, teachers planned to meet the needs of different groups and individuals in their classes. Teaching assistants had specific charge of those children who needed more individual attention. There was good differentiation of materials so that more pupils could work at a pace suitable for their level of understanding and skill. All teachers managed their classroom environment well and engaged pupils' interests with a range of materials and activities.

The school has received highly focused support from training providers and the local authority (LA). The LA statement of action is clear and identifies rounded support from different services involved with the action plan. Continuing checks by these outside parties on the progress against the school's action plan have been effective, as has the restructuring of the school's organisation to focus on raising standards. Pupils' work is assessed more consistently and in better detail. These assessments show that standards are improving in Key Stage 2.

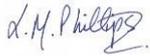
The school is aware that much remains to be done. For example, the system for keeping check on pupils' progress needs to be used more consistently by all staff. The accuracy of their assessments needs to be improved further to have still greater impact on improving teaching and informing parents about their children's progress.

The school has, with justification, prioritised literacy and numeracy for action. Progress in science is not yet monitored and this still needs to be addressed.

The governing body has been strengthened with plans to restructure so that governors can offer support which also challenges. Staff now need to take ownership and accountability for moving the school forward so that the school can act effectively and independently with less external support.

To effect steady improvement, the headteacher needs to concentrate efforts on defining and refining whole school approaches and systems so that there is consistent, coherent practice across the school and planning at all levels makes clear how the progress of pupils at the school will be managed so that they achieve their best.

Yours sincerely



Linden Phillips
Her Majesty's Inspector