

11 April 2008

Mrs J French
Headteacher
Stradbroke Primary School
Richmond Road
Sheffield
South Yorkshire
S13 8LT

Dear Mrs French

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 10 April 2008, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during my visit.

This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website.

As a result of the inspection in January 2007, the school was asked to:

- improve teaching and learning so that pupils make consistent progress as they move through the school
- provide accurate feedback for staff on how to improve their work
- give pupils clear and accurate guidance on what they have achieved and how they can improve
- use the time available for teaching more effectively to maximise learning.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time the school is making satisfactory progress in addressing the issues for improvement and in raising pupils' achievement.

The school is going through a protracted change in leadership affecting the pace of improvement. Following the retirement of the previous headteacher and deputy headteacher in the autumn term, you and your deputy took up temporary posts in January 2008. A new headteacher has recently been appointed for next September. With support from the local authority (LA), much has been done in the past six months to tackle the areas for improvement, although there is only limited evidence of impact.

In 2007, the value the school added for pupils in Year 6 was significantly below average. These pupils started Year 3 with standards which were below average. Their progress in English, mathematics and science, viewed separately, was broadly in line with the national average, but their overall progress was below expectations. There was a slight decline in results in mathematics and science in Key Stage 2. Results in English improved and, in that subject alone, the proportion of pupils reaching the expected level was in line with the national average. Standards in Key Stage 1 were below average and fell in reading, writing and mathematics. Some of the school's targets were met, but others were not. Attendance has improved but remains below average. The overall picture had not improved since the last inspection.

Since last summer's results, the school has taken determined steps to raise achievement. Based on test results, it has identified areas of mathematics and independent writing as priorities for improvement. Suitable targets have been set for all year groups and are being reviewed regularly. However, recent assessments of pupils' progress give limited confidence that the targets for 2008 will be met. One reason for this is that teachers' confidence in assessing pupils' work, although developing, remains limited.

To raise standards and ensure better progress the school has focused appropriately on improving teaching and learning. Staff have had much relevant training and useful support from LA consultants and progress has been monitored carefully. Senior school staff introduced regular monitoring of lessons and have a clear understanding of strengths and weaknesses. In the autumn term, with the help of the LA's improvement adviser, all teachers were given rigorous feedback making clear both what worked well and what needed to improve. More recent feedback has lacked this clarity, but the combination of monitoring and training is improving the consistency of teaching.

Pupils, too, now receive regular feedback on their work. A consistent marking system is being used throughout the school. Curricular targets are displayed on classroom walls and pupils spoken to say they know when they have achieved them. They receive the help they need if they find work difficult. Some teachers, though not all, involve pupils effectively in assessing their own work. The usefulness of teachers' comments on work varies, and sometimes misses opportunities to show how pupils could achieve higher standards.

A start has been made on sharpening assessment and linking it more closely to the next steps in learning. Pupils' progress towards individual targets has been reviewed each term this year, and this is giving senior staff a clearer picture of what achievement looks like across the school and where resources need to be redeployed to raise standards. There has been an appropriate focus on areas needing improvement, such as writing and mathematics. Funding has been used to hasten progress, for example by maintaining booster groups. Teachers have been trained to assess what their pupils can do. They are aware of those who are at risk of underachieving. However, they are not confident in the accuracy of their assessment, and do not always plan effectively for different needs.

The school has taken some effective steps to use teaching time more effectively to maximise learning. Teachers plan together as year teams, making useful links between subjects. As a result, independent writing skills are practised in realistic contexts. Pupils use a single writing book for all subjects, giving them and their teachers a clearer sense of progress in writing, though planning for the progressive development of writing skills is less clear. Teams are also working together to spread teaching approaches which maximise learning, and pupils' responses show these approaches are making a positive difference to their enjoyment of many lessons. Inspection evidence supports the school's view that teaching and learning are satisfactory and sometimes good. Strengths of teaching include effective management of pupils' behaviour and consistency in specifying objectives for each lesson. However, there is some way to go before teaching and learning are good enough to raise achievement significantly. In particular, some lessons offer too little challenge and encouragement for independent learning. The school lacks comprehensive and effective plans for improving the teaching of mathematics and English, and robust arrangements for monitoring and evaluating subjects.

I hope that you have found the visit helpful in promoting improvement in your school.

Yours sincerely

Susan Bowles
Her Majesty's Inspector