

CfBT Inspection Services  
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 566932  
Direct F 01695 729320  
[hcarnall@cfbt.com](mailto:hcarnall@cfbt.com)



2 July 2009

Mrs E Shannon  
Headteacher  
Highfields Primary School  
Highfields  
Doncaster  
South Yorkshire  
DN6 7JE

Dear Mrs Shannon

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Highfields Primary School

Following my visit with Naila Zaffar, additional inspector, to your school on 30 June and 1 July 2009, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the second monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures in November 2008. The monitoring inspection report is attached and the main judgements are set out below.

Progress since being subject to special measures – satisfactory

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – satisfactory

Newly qualified teachers may not be appointed.

I am copying this letter and the monitoring inspection report to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the interim executive board and the Assistant Director, Children and Young People's Services, Education and Inclusion, for Doncaster.

Yours sincerely

Christine Harrison  
Additional Inspector

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Highfields Primary School

Report from the second monitoring inspection on 30 June and 1 July 2009

## Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher and other senior leaders, members of the interim executive board (IEB), groups of pupils, the school improvement partner and representatives from the local authority.

## Context

Following the monitoring visit in March 2009, the governing body was replaced by an IEB. The collaborative partnership with another primary school has been extended and the headteacher of the partner school now has the role of executive headteacher, working with and supporting the headteacher. Similarly, an associate deputy headteacher is now working alongside the deputy headteacher for several days each week. A newly qualified teacher has been replaced, on a temporary basis, by a more experienced teacher.

## Achievement and standards

Standards have risen for the current Year 6 pupils and provisional results in the 2009 national tests indicate a significant improvement compared with the results for 2008. There are two main reasons for these better results. Firstly, this particular Year 6 had better levels of attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 than the preceding year group. However, another important factor was the carefully focused work undertaken in both English and mathematics to prepare pupils for the tests. Nevertheless, standards remain low in other year groups and there is still significant underachievement. Inspection evidence shows that most pupils are now making better progress. However, this rate of progress is not good enough to make up for the ground lost by these pupils in the past. Pupils make most progress when teachers use assessment information to plan activities that genuinely challenge pupils and engage their interest. Intervention strategies, particularly those involving the development of literacy, are successfully delivered by learning support assistants and are beginning to improve pupils' skills. Pupils who speak English as an additional language and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are being identified earlier and support is provided so that they make similar progress to that of their peers. However, despite this generally improving situation, important weaknesses remain. Pupils are not making enough progress in Key Stage 1. Throughout the school, more able pupils make slower progress than others. For both these groups, the work they are given is not sufficiently demanding and so the pace of learning is too slow.

Progress since the last visit on the area for improvement:

- Raise standards and improve achievement for all pupils in all subjects – satisfactory

### Personal development and well-being

Pupils' behaviour and attitudes remain satisfactory. However, pupils say that the atmosphere around school continues to get better. They particularly appreciate the more attractive learning environment. Improvements to the outdoor space for Early Years Foundation Stage pupils, colourful new furniture in classrooms and, especially, some lively and informative displays of pupils' work, all contribute to a more positive ethos in school. Pupils now have more opportunities to make a contribution to the running of the school and have been consulted on a variety of matters from the school's new logo to the colour of the paintwork on the outside of the school. Pupils value the newly established school council which, as well as providing opportunities for pupils to make suggestions, also offers a useful chance for older pupils to talk with the youngest and see things from their point of view. Although attendance is satisfactory, several pupils arrive late for school. Improving punctuality will be a priority for the newly appointed parent support advisor.

### Quality of provision

The quality of teaching and learning has improved since the last monitoring inspection and the proportion of lessons that are inadequate has been reduced. This is partly the result of changes in staffing. However, there has also been a significant improvement in the emphasis that teachers place on pupils' learning. A greater sense of urgency is apparent in lessons. Planning has improved and is generally at least satisfactory for middle and lower attainers. Teachers manage pupils well so that good behaviour is usually maintained, although concentration still lapses at times when the work is too easy. There is still some way to go in matching the work in lessons to pupils' precise needs. This is particularly significant for higher attainers who are often given work that is too straightforward and does not enable them to make enough progress. Guided reading has not been effectively organised in the past and pupils have often not made enough progress with their reading. There are signs that this is improving and a well-planned session was observed with all pupils making good progress. Marking is better than it was and pupils do generally get information about what they need to do to improve their work. However, this is not yet entirely consistent. Where the teacher goes through work in class, pupils do not always correct their version, thus losing some of the value of the advice and feedback they receive. Despite the overall improvement, some teaching remains inadequate. In these lessons, the pace is too slow; pupils are insufficiently challenged, become bored and drift away from their tasks.

The school's recent assessments have all been fully checked by local authority advisers and are now, for the first time in recent years, reliable, accurate and genuinely useful. This is a major area of improvement for the school and will enable better estimates of

pupils' progress in the future. However, past inaccuracies in assessment mean that teachers are not yet accustomed to being able to rely on the assessment of pupils' levels and to use that information in their planning.

Pupils are beginning to experience a wider and more carefully planned curriculum. The current curriculum has been overhauled to ensure that pupils are enabled to use their literacy and numeracy skills in lessons across all subjects and to guarantee that pupils are covering the topics they need and not repeating things they already know. The social and emotional aspect of learning (SEAL) curriculum has been re-launched and assemblies are used to set goals and then to celebrate when personal goals are achieved. Pupils now have two lessons each week in information and communication technology (ICT) and teachers are beginning to make use of interactive whiteboards in their teaching. However, pupils' own use of ICT in the course of their learning across the curriculum remains limited. A new curriculum, covering a variety of interesting topics and intended to improve pupils' skills, has been planned for the next two years and is being checked to ensure full compliance with the National Curriculum.

Pupils now enjoy more visits which extend their experience and provide more exciting opportunities for learning. Similarly, they benefit from visitors coming into school, including representatives of the local church and a speaker helping pupils to understand more about Sikhism. Pupils appreciate the extra-curricular activities that have been reintroduced. Links with families are encouraged, for example by arrangements for Nursery pupils and their parents to learn computer skills together.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- Eradicate inadequate teaching and ensure that assessment information is used to match work to pupils' needs more closely to enable them to learn more effectively – satisfactory
- Ensure that the curriculum meets the needs of all pupils, through improving the range, challenge and variety of learning activities – satisfactory

### Leadership and management

The executive headteacher and associate deputy headteacher have significantly strengthened the school's leadership team. Although they have only been in post for a few months, they have already been involved in accurate and realistic monitoring of teaching, moderating assessments and ensuring that the current curriculum is satisfactorily planned. The school's permanent leaders are very appreciative of this support in dealing with the challenges faced by the school and are successfully developing their leadership skills alongside their new colleagues.

The school's self-evaluation is becoming more accurate, particularly as there are more people involved in all aspects of monitoring. Lesson observations are more rigorous and scrutiny of pupils' work is being used to good effect. The next step, already being planned, is to consult pupils on the quality of their experiences. Leaders are aware that it

will become increasingly important for the permanent members of the leadership team to take more responsibility for all aspects of self-evaluation, with the supporting leaders moving to more of a checking and advisory role.

The school's planning for improvement is steadily becoming more precise. Plans are regularly monitored and adjusted in the light of new priorities. Even minor weaknesses identified in the first monitoring inspection have been included in the school's planning, showing the school's real thirst for improvement. Since the previous monitoring visit, staff have become more strongly committed to ensuring that the school moves forward and now share the leadership team's determination to succeed.

The skills of subject leaders are still in the early stages of development but some progress has been made. For example, new policies have been established, subject specific training has been undertaken and these teachers have fed back to colleagues in order to share what they have learnt. Nevertheless, developing the expertise of subject leaders is recognised as an important area for improvement as the school moves towards greater independence.

The IEB has only been in place for a few weeks but it has already brought considerable energy, rigour and professionalism to the school. Members of the board have each taken responsibility for a particular aspect and come into school every week to assess progress. Everything they do is fully documented. They are supportive, but also demanding and challenging, thus providing a valuable model for leadership within the school.

Progress since the last visit on the area for improvement:

- Ensure that leaders, managers and governors rigorously monitor all aspects of the school's work and take effective and swift action to remove weaknesses – satisfactory

#### External support

The local authority responded swiftly to the findings of the first monitoring inspection and is now providing more focused and longer-term support for the school. In particular, the appointments of the executive headteacher and associate deputy headteacher have significantly increased the school's leadership. This level of support cannot be maintained indefinitely and the true test of its effectiveness will come as the school gradually moves towards full autonomy. The local authority is aware that it is important that the support is maintained for as long as possible, and then only withdrawn gradually, to ensure that the many benefits seen so far are maintained.

#### Priorities for further improvement

- The priorities for further improvement continue to be those identified at the school's inspection in November 2008.