

07 July 2009

Mr Brendan Aspell
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Dear Mr Aspell

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 22 June, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during my visit. Please pass on my thanks, especially to the staff and pupils who took the time to speak to me.

This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website.

As a result of the inspection on 12-13 June 2008, the school was asked to:

- raise standards in English, mathematics and science by ensuring that pupils know what they are to learn and are challenged and engaged consistently.
- improve teaching by checking the quality rigorously and providing guidance to teachers as to how to improve.
- implement strategies to enable pupils to take more responsibility for their own behaviour and learning.
- develop the expertise of subject leaders so they become more accountable for raising standards.

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 the pupils' achievement.

The most recent test results for the end of Key Stage 2 indicate that standards have remained broadly similar to those found at the time of the last inspection when they were judged to be well below average. Whilst there has been an improvement in standards in mathematics and science, English has slipped back. Achievement remains satisfactory but there are improvements in the progress that pupils make by the time they leave at the end of Year 6 in all three core subjects and, especially in mathematics and science.

In previous years, and in the current Year 6, the school has placed too much emphasis on pupils catching up in their final year of schooling rather than ensuring pupils made sufficient progress across the whole of Key Stage 2. The school has recognised this and has made changes in staffing to ensure there are strengths in teaching all year groups so that most pupils can achieve one level of progress by the end of Year 4. At present much of the best teaching is in Year 6. The school's own analysis of the performance of pupils currently in Year 5 indicate that a much higher proportion than in previous years has already reached the expected level in reading, writing and numeracy for the end of Key Stage 2.

The school knows through improved analysis of data which groups of pupils are not doing as well as they could, including higher attaining pupils and low attaining girls but initiatives to raise the performance of these groups are at an early stage of development.

The school recognises that teaching remains satisfactory overall but with an increasing proportion that is good. Senior leaders have a clear knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses in teaching through undertaking thorough regular monitoring. Most lessons are well structured and learning objectives are regularly shared with pupils. Behaviour management is good and teachers use praise and rewards well to give pupils positive feedback. Pupils are getting more opportunities to work independently and make choices about their work. In the best lessons they are involved in assessing and evaluating their own and others' work. However, too many lessons are dominated by teacher talk and there are insufficient activities for pupils to work independently, despite lesson plans indicating independent tasks. Pupils themselves say they are not given enough opportunities to make choices about their learning.

Most lessons plan for pupils to develop their speaking and listening skills, although in a few mathematics lessons speaking is dominated by boys. The school has recognised this and is developing some separate teaching groups for boys and girls to develop the confidence of girls. There are a few good examples of pupils receiving detailed written feedback in English and mathematics on how to improve their work. This is not consistent across the school and too often marking consists of ticks and brief praise comments. Whilst most pupils know their levels and targets they do not regularly have a written record of these.

Behaviour has improved although it remains a concern for many pupils. Behaviour seen during the visit around school, in assembly and lessons and on the playground was mostly good. Staff and pupils speak very highly of the nurture groups developed since the last inspection which take place during some afternoons for the pupils with the most challenging behaviour. There are benefits both to the rest of the class when the pupils go out and to the targeted pupils themselves when they return to mainstream lessons. The school still needs to consider how to evaluate and measure the success of the nurture group and how the pupils can make up the lost curriculum time when they are fully reintegrated into lessons. Pupils are very proud

of their new playground which the school council proposed and which has led to better behaviour at break times.

There have been significant changes since the last inspection with new leadership in mathematics and science. Leadership in these subjects is therefore still at an early stage of development but all the core subject leaders have clearly identified the key priorities for improvement and within each subject there are role models to demonstrate good teaching. Leadership and management in literacy have been enhanced by the deployment of an advanced skills teacher to monitor teaching and model best practice. Subject leaders' observation of other teachers remains underdeveloped.

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

Yours sincerely

Mark Sims
Her Majesty's Inspector