

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

T 0300 1231231
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk

Direct T 01695 566930
Direct F 01695 729320

05 March 2010

Mrs Tina Murphy
Headteacher
Holy Trinity C of E VA Primary School
Brockley Avenue
South Shields
Tyne and Wear
NE34 0TS

Dear Mrs Murphy

Fresh Start: monitoring inspection of Holy Trinity C of E Primary School

Introduction

Following my visit to your school on 03-04 March 2010, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the fourth monitoring inspection since the school opened in September 2008.

Evidence

The inspector observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, middle leaders and staff.

Context

One newly qualified teacher has joined the school, on a temporary basis, to replace a teacher who was promoted to another school. A second newly qualified teacher is on maternity leave.

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning.

Pupils' attainment on entry to the school is well below that typically expected for their age. A high proportion of children have poor communication skills or speech and language difficulties. Children make good and often exceptionally good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage Unit. School data show that children who left the unit in July 2009 achieved as well and sometimes better than others of their age.



This good progress has been sustained. The Early Years Foundation Stage leader has established a very effective Year 1 transition class. Pupils in the class benefit from exciting and challenging activities that are very well adapted to their needs and interests. As a result, they are confident and enthusiastic learners and the attainment of this year group, one of the first to begin their education at Holy Trinity, is in line with national expectations.

The attainment of pupils in Years 2 to 6 remains below average but it is improving. These pupils joined the school with a significant legacy of underachievement and many had weaknesses in the basic skills of literacy and numeracy. Many pupils lack confidence and are reluctant to offer their opinions or answer questions. They have few independent learning skills and will often work on relatively undemanding tasks diligently and without complaint. The school is tackling these weaknesses successfully. Pupils' handwriting, spelling and punctuation have improved and pupils of all abilities take pride in their work and want to succeed. They are acquiring a sound understanding of mathematical concepts, although opportunities to apply these skills in investigative tasks are limited in some classes. The school's creative curriculum includes many of the foundation subjects. It is designed to help pupils learn effectively and it is having a very positive impact. Pupils work with a partner or as part of a group. They carry out research tasks and learn to plan and organise their work. They pose and answer questions and provide evidence to support their views. In these lessons pupils enjoy learning and work with enthusiasm. This approach is giving pupils the confidence and skills to become effective learners.

Pupils identified as having special educational needs and/or disabilities or those who are looked after progress as well as their peers. Their progress is tracked rigorously and any underachievement is investigated. The school has implemented a number of strategies designed to improve pupils' attainment. It implements these strategies thoroughly and evaluates their success robustly. 'Every Child a Reader' is making a strong contribution to improving pupils' attainment. The school, with the backing of the local authority, is targeting this resource to those year groups where the need is greatest.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the monitoring inspection in November 2009:

- Use information gained from marking and day-to-day assessment to plan work which helps pupils to overcome weaknesses in their basic skills – good.
- Ensure that the tasks pupils are given are accurately matched to their ability – good.
- Develop school-wide strategies to encourage all pupils to answer questions and contribute their ideas and opinions – good.

Personal development and well-being

Pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is good. They are courteous to others and listen carefully to their teachers and peers. The school gives pupils effective moral guidance. Pupils make sensible choices and decisions and they know how to

stay safe and care for others. They take on responsibilities in the school willingly and carry them out very carefully. The daily assemblies are particularly joyful occasions. Pupils are given very good opportunities for reflection and they learn about Christian beliefs and about other faiths. Classes lead acts of worship. This promotes pupils' understanding and it makes a strong contribution to their social development. Pupils' cultural development is satisfactory. The school provides an adequate range of enrichment activities and it intends to extend this in the future. The free breakfast club is well attended and provides pupils with a calm and positive start to the day. Pupils have a good understanding of how to live healthy lifestyles. School lunches are nutritious and the lunchtime experience is designed to help pupils regard eating as a pleasant social activity. Pupils contribute to their own community and they are developing a secure understanding of the needs of those who are less fortunate. Pupils are happy at school because they are well supported and, as a result, most attend regularly.

Quality of provision

Teaching is improving. About half of the teaching seen during the visit was good or better and although the remainder was satisfactory there were elements of good teaching in nearly all lessons. Teachers have been provided with clear guidance about the school's expectations and they are given regular feedback that helps them to improve their work. Middle and senior leaders work alongside staff to improve provision. This is very successful and it is helping some staff to tackle new ways of working with greater confidence. New appointments have made a positive start and the school is able to provide these teachers with very effective mentors. The school has identified the barriers to raising pupils' attainment and it is developing innovative strategies to overcome them. As a result, the curriculum is good and improving rapidly. The curriculum offered to pupils in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Year 1 is exemplary and the creative curriculum is providing older pupils with similar opportunities to extend their knowledge, experience and skills through challenging and interesting activities. Pupils are well cared for, guided and supported. The school supports its most vulnerable pupils particularly well but it also keeps a very close eye on the well-being of all pupils. It pursues any persistent non-attendance rigorously and it is vigilant in tracking the whereabouts of any pupils suspected of leaving the school or area. The school complies with the latest guidance on safeguarding pupils and it ensures that staff new to the school are familiar with the school's safeguarding policies.

Leadership and management

The headteacher leads the school very effectively. She has planned and promoted all aspects of the school's development. Her determination, energy and hard work have ensured that the school has made good progress in all aspects of its development during its first five terms. She is very well supported by the deputy headteacher and together they have implemented robust systems to identify the school's strengths and weaknesses. They monitor all aspects of the school's provision rigorously and they tackle any areas that require improvement promptly and effectively. The

headteacher is particularly skilled at identifying the strengths of the staff and she has the confidence to allow them to implement new approaches to their work. This has helped the school to develop some innovative practice and overcome potential barriers to improvement, particularly but not exclusively with regard to learning. As a result, the leadership skills of some middle managers are improving rapidly. Governors share the headteacher's ambitions and they are determined that 'only the best will do'. The governing body has a secure understanding of the school's work and it has helped senior staff resolve some long-standing difficulties. Governors and the senior team are firmly focused on continuous improvement and there is sufficient expertise in the school to bring their plans to fruition. As a result, the school's capacity for further improvement is good.

External support

The local authority and the diocese have supported the school very effectively. Much of this support was provided during the first months of the school's life and it helped the senior team to lay secure foundations for the future. The school received additional support from the School Improvement Partner and this supported the school's own improvement initiatives. In recent months the local authority has, rightly, reduced much of its support as the school's own capacity developed. The school is aware that it can call on additional support should it be needed.

Main judgements

The school's overall progress is good.

Priorities for further improvement

- Improve pupils' achievement by ensuring that learning skills developed through the 'creative curriculum' are applied in literacy and numeracy.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the Chair of Governors and the Director of Children's Services for South Tyneside local authority. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Christine Graham
Her Majesty's Inspector