

CfBT Inspection Services T 0300 1231231
Suite 22 enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
West Lancs Investment Centre www.ofsted.gov.uk
Maple View
Skelmersdale
WN8 9TG

Direct T 01695 566934
Direct F 01695 729320
gtunncliffe@cfbt.com
www.cfbt-inspections.com



22 June 2011

Mrs E Preston
Headteacher
Gladstone Primary School
Anchor Road
Sandford Hill
Stoke-on-Trent
Staffordshire
ST3 5EW

Dear Mrs Preston,

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools: monitoring inspection of Gladstone Primary School

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 21 June 2011, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during the inspection. Please pass on my thanks to the members of the governing body, staff, parents and pupils who gave up their time to speak with me.

Since the last inspection, the school has settled well into its new building and site. This greater stability follows a decade of disruption due to school amalgamation, five years operating over a split site and then the process of planning and moving to a brand new building. There have been many staff changes, both temporary and permanent. A new staffing structure was introduced in September 2010. This strengthened, in particular, the school's senior leadership team.

As a result of the inspection on 3 February 2010, the school was asked to tackle the most important areas for improvement which are set out in the annex to this letter.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time the school has made satisfactory progress in making improvements and satisfactory progress in demonstrating a better capacity for sustained improvement.

Pupils' average levels of attainment continue to rise in Years 1 to 5. Due to the high proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and the many disruptions to staffing for this cohort, Year 6 pupils have not attained the levels expected for their age throughout their time in school. Nonetheless, they have achieved satisfactorily. This year's dip in Year 6 attainment was predicted by the school and local authority. However, throughout the school, the proportion of pupils making the expected rate of progress in English and mathematics is increasing which reflects the good quality of teaching. Current data for pupils now in Years 4 and 5 show that a far larger proportion is on track to meet or exceed the levels expected by the end of Year 6. Comprehensive

January 2011



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

arrangements for tracking pupils' progress are well-established and staff rigorously analyse this information to identify where additional support or challenge is required. As a result, all groups of pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, achieve equally.

Attainment in mathematics is rising across the school. A major reason for this improvement is because teachers are now assessing pupils' learning against a strict set of criteria. These identify clearly what pupils know, understand and can do and help teachers to build effectively on pupils' prior learning. This is helping to improve the quality of teachers' marking which, although still inconsistent in some areas, increasingly shows pupils what they need to do to improve their work. A whole-school focus on improving pupils' ability to solve problems in mathematics is playing a positive part in this. Pupils' work in their books and in lessons shows that they are more able to use the strategies they learn to find the solution to word problems with confidence and speed. These skills are also apparent in other curriculum areas. For example, pupils in Year 5 enjoyed solving problems relating to Victorian steam train journeys and engaged fully in the 'massive underpants' investigation. Pupils say they thoroughly enjoy these activities. They demonstrate a better understanding of mathematical vocabulary overall because of the greater emphasis on it in classroom displays and in their books. The 'Passport to Learning' section of the home school diaries has focused on mathematics throughout the year so that parents and carers are also closely involved in developing their children's mathematical skills at home.

There are now regular opportunities for children in the Nursery and Reception classes to learn and play together. They share the outdoor area daily and this provides regular opportunities for children of different ages to form new friendships across classes. Opportunities to enjoy indoor activities together are currently limited to one afternoon each week. These occasions are popular with all the children and the school is rightly considering extending this way of working to support children's developing language and social skills further and to help with transition into Reception. Current arrangements restrict the opportunities staff have to share best practice through modelling. There are some instances of over-support of children by adults and a related lack of challenge and expectation. The Early Years Foundation Stage leader is now firmly established in her role. She ensures that teachers in Nursery and Reception plan together so that there is continuity in terms of the topics covered by the three classes. However, children do not mix during specific phonics – the sounds that letters make - sessions. The rising trend of children reaching a good level of achievement by the end of Reception now spans four consecutive years.

Following the last inspection, the school appointed a community cohesion leader. She has developed a coherent action plan. The school works well with the local community to provide pupils with a strong awareness of their own cultural heritage. The school is proactive in its search for new links although progress in this area is relatively slow. National and global links are developing in Llandudno, Scotland and Nigeria. The school makes the most of parents who can come into school to talk about different cultures and beliefs.

Classrooms display a variety of religious artefacts and books that feature different cultures. Spanish vocabulary and aspects of life in Spain feature in every room. The school plans to redesign its religious education programme to widen the number of faiths studied.

The local authority has provided effective advice and support in a range of areas, including assessment in the Early Years Foundation Stage. The local authority shows its confidence in the current leadership and the capacity of the school to improve further by confirming its self-evaluation and key improvement priorities.

I hope that you have found the inspection helpful in promoting improvement in your school. This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Jane Hughes
Additional Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place on 3 February 2010.

- Raise attainment in mathematics by:
 - improving the quality of marking to match that in English
 - giving pupils more opportunities to develop their numeracy skills in other subjects and in solving problems in mathematics lessons
 - developing pupils' understanding of mathematical language.
- Extend learning for the children in the Early Years Foundation Stage by providing opportunities for children in the Nursery and Reception to work together.
- Provide more opportunities to prepare pupils for life in a culturally diverse society.