

20 January 2011

Mrs K Luff
Headteacher
Dryclough Church of England Voluntary Controlled Infant School
Dryclough Road
Crosland Moor
Huddersfield
West Yorkshire
HD4 5HX

Dear Mrs Luff,

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools: monitoring inspection of Dryclough Church of England Voluntary Controlled Infant School

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 19 January 2011, for the time you gave to our phone discussion and the on-site preparation visit, and for the information which you provided before and during the inspection. Please also pass on my thanks to the staff and pupils for taking time to talk to me.

There have been several significant changes to the leadership team since the last inspection in December 2009. The headteacher retired and the senior assistant headteacher was appointed as headteacher in September 2010. An assistant headteacher was appointed in January 2010 and two members of staff with teaching and learning responsibilities have been appointed as acting assistant headteachers from January 2011.

As a result of the inspection on 7 and 8 December 2009, the school was asked to address 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' achievement is improving. Attainment, as assessed by teachers at the end of Year 2 in 2010, improved significantly in reading and writing and for the first time in five years moved closer to average. Attainment in mathematics also rose but remained below average. Pupils exceeded their challenging targets. The school is aware that pupils' targets for the end of the current Year 2, although challenging, will once again need to be exceeded if the improvements seen in attainment in 2010 are to be maintained. Pupils have more opportunities to write and practise their writing skills in other subjects and, as a result, attainment and progress in writing continue to improve across the school. Teachers' marking is detailed and provides clear guidance to help pupils improve their work and reach their

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targets. Pupils eagerly explained their targets and know, for example, that they can improve their writing by adding interesting words and the correct punctuation.

Lessons observed indicate that the teaching profile remains similar to that seen at the last inspection. Relationships and effective behaviour management were positive features in all the lessons observed. Independent or group activities are usually planned to match the different abilities but pupils are not always clear about what is expected of them and this slows their learning. Although there is some challenge for the more able, this is not always enough both in whole-class teaching and independent work. There are examples of some very effective practice, for example, in a Year 1 class each independent activity had clear learning objectives to match pupils' different abilities and these were clearly labelled and colour coded. Pupils knew exactly which their objective was and consequently were soon engrossed in their learning. The school misses opportunities to share good practice such as this. The contribution from teaching assistants varies. Some provide effective support and move pupils' learning on well, while others do not use the resources to best effect to promote learning well enough. Structured programmes for teaching letters and sounds are helping to improve learning in reading and writing. The school is developing its curriculum and teachers are planning more opportunities for writing in different subjects. Raising attainment in mathematics is a focus for the school this year and this is helping to raise standards. Learning in mathematics is now more practical which challenges pupils to think for themselves and is increasing their enjoyment of the subject.

The headteacher is setting a clear direction for the school and has already outlined high expectations for the new senior leaders. In addition to distributing leadership responsibilities more widely, the headteacher is delegating some of her current responsibilities relating to the care and welfare of pupils to other members of staff. The high levels of commitment and dedication shown by senior leaders in ensuring pupils' safety and well-being are still clearly evident. For example, the school has been recently named the most successful school within the local authority for reducing the number of pupils with persistent absence. Attending to pupils' individual complex needs has continued to take up a considerable amount of headteacher time. This, together with a depleted senior leadership team for much of the time since the last inspection, has hampered the progress in improving the rigour of monitoring the quality of teaching. Despite this, pupils' achievement is improving and the school continues to track pupils' progress rigorously and set challenging targets to raise attainment. The school's analysis of data shows that initiatives aimed at improving the reading ages of identified groups of pupils are successfully raising attainment. The headteacher has introduced pupil progress meetings to increase the accountability of the teachers and raise their awareness of any pupils who may be falling behind. Changes to the leadership and management structure have been initiated to give the school a wider base from which to monitor and evaluate its performance and strengthen its capacity further. The school was allocated a new School Improvement Partner in September 2010 and the headteacher is already developing a positive working partnership with her.

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 Brenda McIntosh
Additional Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place on 7-8 December 2009

- Raise standards, particularly in writing by:
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to practise their writing skills
 - making sure that pupils are clear about their learning targets and what they still have to do to reach them.
- Improve the use of information collected about pupils' skills to always provide activities that match pupils' varying capabilities, particularly during independent activities, and to challenge the more able.
- Improve the rigour with which leaders and managers:
 - monitor the quality of teaching, so that it is consistently good
 - review the impact of improvement initiatives on raising attainment.