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06 April 2011

Mr P Whaling
Headteacher
Rishton Methodist Primary School
George Street
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Dear Mr Whaling

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools: monitoring inspection of Rishton Methodist Primary School

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 6 April 2011, for the time you gave to our telephone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during the inspection. Please extend my thanks to the members of the governing body and local authority representatives for the discussions we had, and a special thank you to the pupils I met.

In the term following the inspection, two full-time teachers resigned which resulted in a series of short-term teachers being employed. A permanent teacher was appointed within a couple of months. The following term, a further teacher was appointed to strengthen Key Stage 2 and the senior leadership team. The staffing has been stable during this school year. Despite the staffing changes, the school has not looked back under the leadership of the current headteacher.

As a result of the inspection on 30 April 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 good progress in making improvements, and good progress in demonstrating a better capacity for sustained improvement.

The stability in staffing has resulted in an improvement in the quality of teaching and in pupils' achievement. Attainment has risen in both years since the inspection, though leaders recognise there is still a way to go. The focus on writing is paying benefits, although the writing of some older pupils, particularly boys, still lacks imagination. There has been a considerable improvement in pupils' achievement in mathematics. With the appointment of a new manager for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, these pupils are now making better progress because of the enhanced provision.

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The quality of teaching is better because of good professional training. There has been considerable improvement in managing pupils' behaviour. Teachers provide a range of tasks and are successful in motivating boys by, for example, role play to encourage persuasive writing about the destruction of the rainforest. Skilled teaching assistants contribute considerably to pupils' learning. Teachers' assessment and their recording of pupils' achievements are far more accurate. Rigorous methods are in place to record achievement in writing and number, with the recording of attainment in reading and other aspects of mathematics being well underway. As a result of more accurate assessment, tasks are now better matched to pupils' abilities and there is greater continuity in learning. Teachers continue to plan their lessons conscientiously, although occasionally, when planning for different groups of pupils, they identify the activities to be undertaken rather than the knowledge and skills pupils will acquire. Leaders have devised a thorough system to track the attainment and progress of year groups, and of individual pupils. This has enabled gaps in learning to be quickly identified and remedied and has accelerated pupils' progress. Members of the governing body are playing a far greater role in checking levels of attainment. They are more knowledgeable, clearer about their responsibilities, and are fulfilling their role in holding the school to account.

Parents and carers comment their children are making great strides socially as well as academically. Pupils are far better behaved and have a much more positive attitude to their work and all school offers. Lessons are no longer disrupted by inappropriate behaviour. In addition, it has not been necessary to exclude any pupil for the past four terms. Pupils want to learn, and far more parents are engaged in their child's learning. For example, the after-school book club is full to capacity, and has 12 sets of parents and carers involved. Pupils particularly appreciate the creative alterations to the building that have resulted in sufficient classrooms for each year group. Pupils comment, 'It feels like a proper school now'. The high-quality outdoor facilities now provided for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are used most effectively for all areas of learning. For example, following a phonics session, children had enormous fun as they scampered around the 'pirate ship' accumulating letter sounds as part of their 'phoneme treasure hunt'.

The school has received good support from the local authority. The support of the monitoring and intervention team has been withdrawn because of the rate of school improvement and its capacity to continue to do so. Very good help and advice were provided in addressing difficult staffing issues.

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 Katharine Halifax

Additional inspector

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Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place 30 April 2009

- Raise standards in English, mathematics and science, particularly in writing, by the end of Year 6.
- Develop accurate assessment of pupils' progress that leads to precise planning of teaching to meet the needs of pupils, especially the more able.
- Improve the facilities for learning outdoors for the youngest children.