

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

T 0300 123 1231  
Text Phone: 0161 618 8524  
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk  
[www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

**Direct T** 01695 566855  
**Direct F** 01695 729320  
**Direct email:**  
gail.hill@cfbt.com



30 November 2011

Mrs L Lomas  
Headteacher  
Fieldhead Junior Infant and Nursery School  
Charlotte Close  
Birstall  
Batley  
West Yorkshire  
WF17 9BX

Dear Mrs Lomas

### **Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools: monitoring inspection of Fieldhead Junior Infant and Nursery School**

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 29 November 2011, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during the inspection.

As a result of the inspection on 10 and 11 May 2010, the school was asked to address the most important areas for improvement which are set out in the annex to this letter.

A new headteacher was appointed in September 2010 and, since then, the senior leadership team has been extended. The teaching staff has changed significantly since the previous inspection and, with a number of temporary appointments, staffing is still not stable. The pupil roll has risen by a third in the last year and continues to increase due to new housing nearby. Major improvements to the school building have only recently been completed.

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.

Since the new headteacher started, she and senior leaders have worked together successfully to bring about improvements in the progress of all groups of pupils. They have kept their focus on this while managing the many recent changes to staffing, pupils and the building. As a result published data, school records and lesson observations show that the number of pupils making expected and better-than-expected progress in English and mathematics has increased since the previous inspection. Around a third of the pupils are making exceptional progress; at least double the expected rate, as they make up lost ground. A rise in the number of pupils working above the level expected for their age demonstrates an improvement in the achievement of the more-able pupils. School leaders have identified that the more-able pupils can increase their achievement further but they are at an early stage in planning specific extension activities for this purpose. In some classes

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pupils' speaking skills make a significant contribution to their improved progress, reflecting the teachers' very strong emphasis on pupils discussing and explaining their work. Pupils' enjoyment of school is evident in their enthusiasm for learning and their above-average attendance.

Pupils' progress has improved over the past year because teachers' expectations are much higher and they provide more-stimulating lessons. Teachers are more-consistently effective in assessing the levels at which pupils are working and in using this information to plan lessons that help all groups to accelerate their progress. This consistency comes from the very clear guidance and support provided by senior leaders. A particular strength is the planning of additional challenge that helps the more-able pupils to improve their progress. This is because the challenge is not only to tackle harder work, but also to use different methods of learning, for example: to identify and interpret patterns in information; to compare and explain similarities and differences; and to use more of their own ideas when tackling problems. Some teachers are becoming increasingly skilful in adapting their questions to check the understanding of each ability group during whole-class discussions, but this is not consistent in all classes. Pupils say that one of the biggest changes over the past year is that teachers frequently reassure them: 'It's OK to make mistakes.' and to learn from them, therefore they are confident to tackle more-challenging tasks.

The school's good progress in demonstrating a capacity for sustaining improvement is evident in senior leaders' accurate and frank identification of strengths and weaknesses, the sharply focused improvement plans that stem from this and the fact that these plans have started to improve the achievement of many pupils. The quality of teaching is improving strongly because the new headteacher has empowered the deputy headteacher and a senior teacher to work with her in ensuring that new and more-effective approaches quickly become embedded in every class. To support this process they observe lessons and give teachers very constructive feedback on their strengths and areas to improve. They have significantly improved methods for monitoring pupils' progress and are using this to plan appropriate programmes of support for underachieving pupils. They also use their information on pupils' progress to set very challenging but achievable targets for raising standards and they have the support of all staff in working towards these. They ensure that external support is focused only on the aspects of the school's work that will make the biggest positive difference to pupils' outcomes. As a result local authority support for improving lesson planning has been effective. The school meets all requirements for safeguarding pupils.

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

Yours sincerely

John Rutherford  
Her Majesty's Inspector

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## **Annex**

### **The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in May 2010**

- Raise pupils' attainment in literacy and numeracy by providing higher levels of challenge to the more-able pupils.
- Improve the quality of pupils' learning by matching work more closely and consistently to the differing abilities of the pupils.