

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

T 0300 1231231
Text Phone: 0161 6188524
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk

Direct T 01695 566932
Direct F 01695 729320
Direct email:
hcarnall@cfbt.com



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Mr S Herrington
Headteacher
Bowling Park Primary School
New Cross Street
West Bowling
Bradford
West Yorkshire
BD5 8BT

Dear Mr Herrington

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools: monitoring inspection of Bowling Park Primary School

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when Anthony Kingston, additional inspector and I inspected your school on 14 December 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 pupils, staff, Chair of the Governing Body and the local authority governor and the School Improvement Partner who gave up time to talk to us.

Since it was last inspected, the school has had a large number of staff changes. Two deputy headteachers have been appointed from within the existing staff and four other teachers have been promoted to teaching and learning responsibility posts. Ten new teachers, including three who are newly qualified, have joined the school along with ten new teaching assistants.

As a result of the inspection on 9 June 2010, 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.

Analysis of the school's data and evidence from lessons observed and from pupils' work indicate that pupils' achievement has improved since the last inspection. Attainment is below average but influenced substantially by the high proportion of pupils joining or leaving the school part way through their primary education and the significant number entering with little or no English. Assessment data verify that pupils, particularly those who spend all or most of their primary years at the school, make good progress.

As a result of improvements in teaching, pupils' attainment is rising. This has not gone unnoticed by the pupils who comment 'The children at this school are at the heart of the

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teaching and learning and all our teachers make us feel special'. New staff have settled in quickly and across both of the school's sites a uniform and effective approach to teaching and learning has been established. A sharper focus on pupils' learning has increased their involvement and enjoyment in lessons. Teachers share clear lesson objectives with the pupils at the start of each lesson and provide carefully structured 'steps to success' to guide them through the learning. Pupils have developed a good understanding of how to use these aids and in all classrooms visited they were carrying out interesting and stimulating tasks with application and enthusiasm. Teachers' use of assessment to match work to the needs of the pupils has developed well. Lesson tasks are modified thoughtfully and provide appropriate levels of challenge for pupils of differing abilities. In the most effective lessons, this is done with considerable precision ensuring pupils maintain a fast pace of learning.

Strategies to promote pupils' development as independent learners have been introduced and become firmly established. The 'Talk for Learning' initiative is proving very effective, giving pupils the confidence to answer questions and to express their thoughts and ideas openly during class discussions. Their appreciation of how to use spoken language to good effect has improved markedly. Year 4 pupils, for example, started their responses to open ended questions with well chosen phrases, such as 'In my view' and 'I like what ... said but on the other hand'. Since the last inspection, pupils have become much more involved in decision-making and evaluating the work of the school for themselves. They have grasped these opportunities with great enthusiasm and show considerable pride, maturity and insight when explaining the school's achievements to visitors.

A clear policy for the marking of pupils' work has been established and consistently implemented by teachers. As a result, pupils are receiving much better information about what they have done well and what they need to focus upon next in order to improve. The presentation of pupils' work has shown some improvement, but not as much as many other aspects of their learning. The school has yet to implement a cohesive policy for the teaching of handwriting and many pupils are unclear about the style they should adopt.

Good improvements have been made to the provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and they are making substantially better progress than at the time of the last inspection. Comprehensive procedures ensure pupils' needs are quickly and precisely identified and a carefully planned framework of support strategies has been put in place to promote their learning. Thorough assessment systems are incorporated to ensure pupils make the expected progress and systematic monitoring by senior staff allow adjustments to be made strategically if and when required. As a result, the progress made by pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities now matches that of other pupils. Support for pupils who are experiencing difficulties in their lives or need additional help with their behaviour has been completely and very effectively reorganised. A team of learning mentors, managed by a deputy headteacher, provides a comprehensive programme of support for carefully identified pupils. One very positive outcome is that the number of pupil exclusions from school has reduced substantially and there have been none so far this year.

Since the last inspection, well considered changes to personnel and responsibilities have strengthened leadership and management and ensured that the skills and expertise of the staff are used to best advantage. School development has focused sharply on the areas for improvement identified in the last inspection report and well-constructed plans have been instigated to ensure improvement continues. Teachers' understanding of pupil progress data and how to use it to the raise attainment has been further developed. The School Improvement Partner has worked closely with the school offering careful analysis and regular advice. The school has been proactive in obtaining the support and guidance it needed to increase pupils' progress and improve teaching and learning. This strategy has proved very effective and enabled the local authority to reduce the monitoring and support it provides for the school to a 'light touch'.

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

Keith Bardon
Additional inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in June 2010

- Raise attainment for all groups of pupils and improve their progress and achievement in all subjects by:
 - ensuring that teaching focuses on the quality of pupils' learning in the lesson
 - developing independent learning where pupils are at the centre of activities
 - using assessment to plan lessons that meet the needs of the pupils, develop high expectations and make better use of time in lessons
 - rigorously implementing the school's marking policy and embedding in pupils a desire to take a pride in the presentation of their work.

- Improve the provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities by:
 - implementing additional programmes of study to support pupils' progress to the next level
 - developing the nurture programme so that it reflects best practice in other schools and further reduces the number of exclusions from school.