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26 January 2012

Mrs Holdsworth  
Headteacher  
Elland CofE Junior and Infant School  
Westgate  
Elland  
West Yorkshire  
HX5 0BB

Dear Mrs Holdsworth

### **Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools with additional focus on behaviour: monitoring inspection of Elland CofE Junior and Infant School**

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school without notice on 25 January 2012, for the time you gave to our discussions and for the information which you provided during the inspection. Please thank your staff and pupils for talking to me about their work and for helping with the inspection. I am also grateful to the Chair of the Governing Body and the local authority for assistance with this visit.

Since the previous inspection there have been several changes to staffing and governors. The deputy headteacher and two members of staff have left and have been replaced by two new teachers and a seconded deputy headteacher from a local school. The governing body has been strengthened with the appointment of a new Chair and vice-chair and two new parent governors.

As a result of the inspection on 4 October 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 satisfactory progress in making improvements. The effectiveness of the school in improving pupils' behaviour is good.

### **Achievement of pupils at the school**

Following the previous inspection the school has taken a range of appropriate steps to improve achievement which in turn are leading to improvements in classroom practice. There are positive signs in pupils' work and from school data that increasing numbers of pupils are making better progress than previously. Although not consistent in all classes, there is a tighter focus in lessons on what pupils need to know and do in order to progress. Similarly there is an increasing emphasis on practical and active learning which ensures pupils gain, apply and reinforce their knowledge and skills. There are clearer expectations of the progress pupils should make backed up with regular reviews of how well pupils are

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achieving. Tracking systems are more effective in identifying pupils who are underachieving. Staff are increasingly held to account for the progress pupils make. Teachers are growing in confidence in judging the level of pupils' work. As a result, the school is better placed to judge how well pupils are progressing and the planning of support and intervention for pupils is improving.

Current data indicate that pupils in Years 1 and 2 are catching up in reading and writing. In Year 6 more pupils are on track to reach expected levels of progress in English and mathematics. Nevertheless, pupils' attainment is still lower than it should be and the progress of pupils is not consistent in all year groups, most noticeably in Year 4. There are still areas of underachievement, due to disrupted teaching and poor learning in the past, and potential for pupils to do better based on their starting points,. In addition, across the school not enough pupils are reaching the higher levels in their work. This is because of variations in how work is planned for higher-ability pupils. Too often, tasks are not demanding enough which result in pupils not achieving as well or as rapidly as they should.

### **The quality of teaching**

Teaching is more stable with fewer disruptions to staffing. This means that the quality of pupils' learning is improving and pupils are making better progress. The proportion of good and better teaching is beginning to increase but is not strong enough to overcome the legacy of underachievement and to make up for gaps in pupils' knowledge and skills. Nevertheless, there is a greater emphasis on placing pupils' learning at the heart of planning and in making learning more active and engaging. Teachers have developed their understanding of what constitutes effective practice through training and support. There are increasing opportunities in lessons, particularly in mathematics, where pupils can use and apply their knowledge in practical and problem-solving activities. New skills are beginning to build more effectively on pupils' prior knowledge. Teaching assistants provide an effective layer of support in lessons, particularly for those who find learning difficult. Although not consistent in all year groups, pupils are experiencing further opportunities to make their own decisions about how they learn and to check each other's understanding. When the planning and teaching are strong, the impact on pupils' progress is significant as when pupils in Year 1 were developing their understanding that a church is a special place for Christians. With skilful prompting from the class teacher pupils were able to investigate and identify key words such as lectern, chalice and font by discussing and sharing their ideas with others.

Where teaching is less strong, work is less demanding and opportunities are missed to engage pupils fully in activities which restrict their ability to work independently, make their own decisions and use their thinking skills.

### **Behaviour and safety of pupils**

Pupils' willingness to learn and their desire to do well are strengthening. During the inspection, pupils behaved well in lessons and as they moved around the school. They appreciate the clearer incentives for encouraging their good behaviour and the tighter

consequences should they falter. As a result, there has been a significant reduction in the number of exclusions and attendance rates have improved.

Pupils talk highly of their learning mentor, feel very safe in school, are confident that staff will listen to their concerns and that any problems will be swiftly resolved. Instances of bullying are dealt with effectively. Pupils commented, 'If we have any problems teachers sort it'.

When asked to express their views on their learning there was clear agreement that their lessons are getting better and that behaviour in class is much improved. Even when activities are less engaging they try to concentrate and generally behave well. This is because they are more involved in making decisions and have increased opportunities to discuss and share their ideas with others. 'Teaching is better now'; 'we get to do more things now'; 'our teachers really help us', were typical comments.

### **The quality of leadership and management of the school**

The headteacher is leading the school in the right direction and has an accurate view of the school's priorities and where further improvements are required. Staff are pulling together and are increasingly aware of their collective responsibility for improving the school. Middle leadership has been strengthened with a clearer structure and leaders with management responsibilities are developing their skills in judging the quality of pupils' work and in influencing the work of colleagues. As a group, they have extended their range of involvement in developmental planning and in evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of the school's provision. Governors are increasing their knowledge and understanding and remain forthright in their desire to see the school improve further. They are growing in confidence to act where necessary to support improvements or to question proposals.

While taking pride in recent improvements and setting the school on the right track, all parties acknowledge that much work is still required to tackle the legacy of underachievement and accelerate pupils' progress further. The school has taken every opportunity to benefit from the sound advice and support from local authority consultants and other professionals. The whole-school commitment to improvement and the positive way the school acts on advice has strengthened its capacity to improve.

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

Steve Isherwood  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Annex**

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

- Accelerate the progress pupils make in Key Stage 2 and improve the quality of teaching by:
  - providing more opportunities for pupils to reason and work things out for themselves
  - reducing the time teachers spend talking to the class, giving more time for pupils to work on individual and group tasks
  - ensuring that lesson activities progress logically and build pupils' knowledge and understanding systematically.
  
- Increase the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
  - ensuring that all staff with management responsibilities are able to make a full contribution to school development
  - increasing the ability of the governing body to hold the school to account and challenge it to improve.