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26 March 2012

Mrs J Alexander-Steele
Headteacher
Ribbleton Avenue Methodist Junior School
Emerson Road
Preston
Lancashire
PR1 5SN

Dear Mrs Alexander-Steele

**Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools with an additional focus on behaviour:
Ribbleton Avenue Methodist Junior School**

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 23 March 2012 and for the information which you provided during the inspection. Discussions with senior leaders and managers, the vice-chair of the governing body, pupils and a local authority officer were also very helpful. Please pass on my thanks to all concerned for the time they gave to talk with me and for the welcome I received.

Since the previous inspection there have been some changes to the school's context. One new member of the teaching staff was appointed in the summer term 2011 and one in the autumn term 2011. A permanent member of staff was absent for a long time. Since September, pupils have been taught in ability groups for English and mathematics. Two members of staff are on long-term absence and there are two temporary teachers covering their posts. The Year 4 teacher has recently become the class teacher for Year 6. There are three new members of the governing body but there are still four parent governor vacancies.

As a result of the inspection on 16 February 2011, 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 the effectiveness of the school in improving pupils' behaviour is satisfactory.

Achievement of pupils at the school

Pupils' attainment fell in 2011 and was much lower than the national average. However, most Year 6 pupils made expected progress from their lower than average starting points. Inspection evidence shows pupils' achievement is improving. Most pupils are making expected progress and an increasing number are making greater gains in their learning. Consequently, attainment is beginning to rise as more pupils are reaching the levels

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expected for their age. Nonetheless, pupils are not making good enough progress in all subjects and classes to ensure attainment levels consistently match the national average.

Pupils' achievement in English is much stronger than in mathematics. The whole-school approach to reading and writing skills is reflected in high quality displays and greater opportunities for pupils to use these skills across the curriculum. However, some pupils' achievement is hampered by poor handwriting and spelling skills. The school has rightly recognised that many pupils have a weak grasp of mathematical language which hinders their progress. Pupils' mathematics books show that some pupils are not always expected to work hard and some spend too long working on concepts they have already grasped.

Pupils say they enjoy their learning. They are willing to work hard and persevere with tasks. Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs are making similar progress to their peers because of the additional support they receive in class. Pupils whose circumstances make them more vulnerable are making expected and sometimes good progress because they benefit from smaller teaching groups.

The quality of teaching

Lesson observations and scrutiny of pupils' work confirm teaching is improving over time. Positive relationships and effective use of praise are typical features in all lessons. Most teachers plan interesting activities which match the needs of pupils and they use questions appropriately to check pupils' understanding. In the most effective lessons, teaching is precise so new learning is clearly introduced and carefully built on. Teaching is less effective when too much of the lesson is dominated by the teacher or time is not used well enough to promote independent learning. Teachers' marking has improved considerably since the previous inspection. Pupils receive clear guidance on how to improve their work. Evidence shows pupils respond to these comments and many receive additional challenges which they complete with confidence.

Improvements to the curriculum mean assessment information is being used more effectively to plan lessons which systematically build on pupils' prior learning. The teaching of reading and writing is stronger because of a whole-school focus on using class books to shape English activities. This means activities are more purposeful, relevant and are better at capturing pupils' interest. Links between different subjects are leading to greater opportunities for pupils to use their key skills across the curriculum. The curriculum is becoming richer because visits and visitors are used more regularly to enliven pupils' learning.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils work and play together harmoniously because they show respect to each other and adults. Some pupils have exceptional attitudes to learning, but when learning fails to excite, pupils become compliant rather than active learners. A very small minority of pupils sometimes cause low-level disruption. Pupils say behaviour has improved. They know how

the school expects them to behave and they feel most pupils follow the rules. They say bullying and name-calling sometimes happen. However, they have a clear understanding of how to keep themselves safe and they have confidence in the school's systems to resolve any issues they raise. A whole-school focus on encouraging pupils to manage their own behaviour is consistently applied by all adults. This is bearing fruit as school records confirm behaviour is improving over time. Fixed-term exclusions are reducing and fewer pupils need additional support to manage their behaviour around school. Attendance rates are improving following the dip at the end of the last academic year and more pupils arrive at school punctually.

The quality of leadership and management of the school

Despite considerable staff turbulence, senior leaders and managers have held firm and continued to drive forward improvement. The school's self-evaluation is accurate. As a result, school development priorities are well matched to areas requiring improvement. Teaching is improving because it is regularly monitored and teachers receive precise feedback to help them improve. Weaknesses are challenged and professional development is appropriately tailored to whole-school and individual need. Middle leaders are making an increasingly valuable contribution to school improvement. They have led curriculum changes, provided whole-school training and are checking the impact of their actions through regular analysis of pupils' books and teachers' planning. The members of the governing body are offering increasing challenge and support through opportunities to meet with key leaders and managers and to scrutinise pupils' work.

Local authority officers are providing effective support to the school. Whole-school training and joint lesson observations have aided senior leaders and managers in improving teaching. Partnerships with a local secondary school have enhanced the information communication technology curriculum.

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

Joanne Olsson
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in February 2011

- Provide a curriculum that meets the needs and aspirations of all pupils by:
 - ensuring planning builds systematically on pupils' learning
 - improving cross-curricular provision to include English, mathematics and information and communication technology
 - extending the variety of enrichment activities to add diversity and interest to the curriculum and broaden pupils' experiences, nationally and internationally.
- Build on recent improvements so that achievement is consistently good for all groups of pupils.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning by:
 - ensuring all lessons include planned activities which challenge all pupils sufficiently
 - ensuring teachers use opportunities to check pupils' progress throughout the lesson and adapt work
 - ensuring pupils have opportunity to respond to teachers' comments on their work and teachers check that guidance for improvement has been followed through into subsequent pieces of work.