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Mrs Alison Mitchell
Headteacher
Burnley St Peter's Church of England Primary School
Church Street
Burnley
Lancashire
BB11 2DL

Dear Mrs Mitchell

Ofsted Monitoring of Schools with Notice to Improve

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when Sonja Øyen HMI and I inspected your school on 26 June 2007, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during my visit. In particular, please also thank Claire and Catherine for giving up part of their lunchtime, Sue for keeping us so well supplied with refreshments and the Year 6 pupils who had to miss time on their wonderful clay waymarker sculptures to speak to me. The visit coincided with geography focus week and we appreciated the efforts made by your school to facilitate the inspection at this time.

This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website. Please inform the Regional Inspection Service Provider of any factual inaccuracies within 24 hours of the receipt of this letter.

As a result of the inspection in December 2006, the school was asked to:

1. raise standards in English and mathematics by planning more opportunities for pupils to write more extended pieces of writing and to solve problems;
2. increase the challenge for higher attaining pupils so that they achieve as well as they can;
3. work with parents to reduce the number of absences, including the number of extended holidays taken in term time.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time the school is making satisfactory progress in addressing each of the issues for improvement and in raising the pupils' achievements.

The December 2006 inspection noted that pupils' standards were low and that their achievement was inadequate. These judgements took into account the slight improvement in the school's results in 2006 and recognised that recent initiatives were leading to more rapid progress for pupils in Years 2 and 6. Our analysis of evidence shows that the pace of learning is continuing to improve for some year groups in some subjects. However, improvement is too patchy and standards remain well below those expected nationally.

Pupils are increasingly aware of their learning targets and the school has been successful in helping parents to support their children's learning. There are now examples of pupils making very good progress, for example at least one pupil in each year group has made better than expected progress. In Years 3 and 4 some pupils regress and in all year groups significant proportions do not progress through the National Curriculum levels. Indications are that approximately half the current Year 6 pupils will make expected rates of progress this year. This will be an improvement on the previous year's results. The headteacher has put in place a range of strategies that are well chosen to ensure that standards continue to rise. Staff are very well supported with their professional development. The headteacher's monitoring of the impact of strategies is accurately identifying strengths and weaknesses. The literacy and numeracy subject leaders have developed their roles very well. They monitor all aspects of their subjects closely and provide good support for other teachers. However, although their analyses show strengths and weaknesses, they are not yet identifying the reasons for discrepancies or targeting support to address them. Monitoring of teaching shows that the quality of teaching and learning is improving but is not yet good enough to enable standards to rise more quickly. It remains satisfactory because the monitoring of teaching is not sufficiently focused on pupils' learning.

Where the school has had a particular area of focus, for example on writing, then pupils' standards have risen much more rapidly. Pupils now write at length for a range of different purposes and are given a good variety of prompts to encourage their ideas. Links between curricular areas help pupils understand the relevance of their writing. Although pupils are provided with resources to support their writing, they are still too reliant on adults when they want to improve their work. New policies designed to improve the pupils' presentation of their work and the quality of teachers' marking are not consistently applied, so expectations set for pupils are not high enough. Only half the pupils are making expected progress in developing their reading. This has a negative impact on writing. Most teachers now plan for pupils to learn more independently and encourage problem-solving. This has been successful in science and helps pupils to make good progress. Although it is not yet sufficiently embedded in all curriculum areas, initiatives such as the geography week are having a positive impact. Similarly, the training that staff receive in using a range of teaching and learning styles and assessment strategies is improving their confidence to allow pupils to work more independently. This is particularly important in helping

to develop pupils' speaking and listening skills which are currently weak and are hampering their progress.

Higher attaining pupils make the best progress when they are given opportunities for independent learning and when teachers' expectations are high. They have made good progress in Years 1, 4 and 5 but in other classes some do not make progress. The headteacher has put sound systems in place to improve outcomes for these pupils. Pupils are correctly identified; their progress tracked and work is increasingly differentiated to meet their needs. The pupils I spoke to in Year 6 valued the increased opportunities for them to be consulted and express their opinions about changes to the school.

Initiatives to improve attendance have been tightened and further developed. Outcomes have improved. Attendance is now only slightly below national figures overall with Key Stage 2 higher than for Key Stage 1. The attendance policy is fully in place and staff understand their roles and responsibilities. First-day absence calls to parents are particularly effective. The learning mentor is helping to improve attendance further by supporting pupils with their behaviour and attitudes. The bilingual support assistant is continuing to develop parents' understanding of the need to reduce the number of extended holidays pupils take in term time. The 'golden ticket' system is successful and very popular with pupils in rewarding them for good attendance and punctuality.

Lancashire Local Authority (LA) is fulfilling the commitments in its statement of action. It has provided good support to the school, particularly for the headteacher who is leading the changes very well to ensure that progress to secure improvements can be sustained. The LA and the diocese also guide and support the governors well in their work. The evidence used to evaluate the progress the school is making has been very extensive but has not always been consistently accurate in relation to the achievement of pupils. External evidence and the increasing accuracy of teacher assessments are now making judgements more secure.

I hope that you have found the visit helpful in promoting improvement in your school.

Yours sincerely

Sonya Williamson
Her Majesty's Inspector