

10 January 2008

Mrs J Wilson
The Headteacher
Skipton, Ings Community Primary and Nursery School
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Dear Mrs Wilson

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools

Thank you for the help you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on Wednesday 9 January, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information you provided before and during my visit. Please could you also pass on my thanks to the vice-chair of governors for meeting with me and to the pupils, particularly the Year 6 pupils who not only told me about their experiences in school but also entertained me with an excellent and impromptu rap.

Since the school's inspection, the trend of declining numbers of pupils has continued and there are now 47 pupils in the main school plus 10 who attend, mornings only, in the Nursery. The proportion of pupils from a Pakistani background has increased and now more than nine out of ten pupils speak English as an additional language. The school gained the Healthy Schools award in 2007.

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 on 18 October 2006, the school was asked to:

- work with parents to reduce absence;
- strengthen governance to ensure that the governing body can fulfil its statutory responsibilities;
- improve the consistency of teaching to ensure that pupils make good progress in all lessons;
- extend the learning of key skills in English and mathematics across the wider curriculum.

In addition, the procedures for safeguarding pupils did not meet current government requirements.

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

The 2007 test results show that standards in Year 6, although well below the national average, are significantly better than they have been in recent years. Pupils' achievement is also much improved. In 2006, the progress made by pupils during their time in school was in the lowest 10% for similar pupils nationally. By contrast, in 2007, the progress matched the national average for similar pupils. Hence pupils' achievement is now more securely satisfactory.

The school has worked hard in its efforts to improve attendance. It is a particular focus in every Friday's assembly; pupils are rewarded for good attendance and they value the rewards. There are posters showing attendance records in every classroom. In addition, the school follows up absences and takes a firm line on extended holidays. Nevertheless, progress in improving attendance has been limited and attendance is only slightly higher than at the time of the inspection. The main stumbling blocks to improving attendance include extended trips to Pakistan taken by several families and the particularly low attendance of a very few pupils.

The governing body has changed significantly since the inspection; it has reduced in size and is now more representative of the community that the school serves. There has been training for new governors and there are now appropriate committees with clear responsibilities. The school now fulfils almost all its statutory duties, although the monitoring of, and reporting on, the race equality policy is not yet fully established. Nevertheless, despite the efforts of the school and the enthusiasm and commitment of the vice-chair, there have been several obstacles to progress and governance remains a weakness. The school has been without a chair of governors since September. Most of the governors are new to their role and not yet experienced enough to take a full part in monitoring the work of the school and holding it to account. Attendance at governors' meetings is a weakness, with two consecutive meetings where the number of governors present was insufficient to form a quorum. As a result, work had to be postponed.

The school has achieved significant success in improving the quality of teaching. Records of lesson observations indicate that teaching is now more consistently good than it was at the time of the inspection. These judgements were confirmed by short lesson observations during the monitoring visit. This better teaching is leading to better progress, shown not only in the improved test results in 2007 but also in the school's current records of the progress of individual pupils. The school has been particularly well supported by local authority (LA) advisers in its efforts to improve teaching. Although no longer part of the LA's Intensifying Support Programme, the school nevertheless feels that help is always available when necessary. Several new initiatives have been successfully introduced to overcome specific weaknesses. For example, monitoring records show that pupils' writing has improved significantly as a result of an innovative approach to teaching the subject. Some of the teaching is outstanding and, in response, pupils simply fizz with excitement at the prospect of producing a piece of persuasive writing. These pupils are keen to demonstrate that they know how to improve and are proud that several people in their class have 'jumped more than two levels'.

The development of language and literacy is genuinely at the heart of all that the school does. For example, in a physical education lesson for Years 1, 2 and Reception, teaching assistants gave instructions with great clarity and emphasis, thus developing pupils' vocabulary as well as their physical skills. However, the use of numeracy skills across the curriculum is less well established and pupils find it difficult to give examples of using number in subjects other than mathematics.

The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils now meet current government requirements.

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

Yours sincerely

Christine Harrison
Additional Inspector