

02 July 2008

Mr M Curtin  
Headteacher  
Baildon C of E Primary School  
Coverdale Way  
Baildon  
ShIPLEY  
West Yorkshire  
BD17 6TE

Dear Mr Curtin

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 01 July 2008, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during my visit. I would like also to thank the chair and vice chair of governors for the discussion we had and the pupils I met, who were all very welcoming and helpful.

Since the inspection of March 2007, the school has changed significantly. It has moved back into restored accommodation after a fire ruined most of it a few months before the last inspection. There have been some changes in staff in each of the key stages, and a total renewal of major resources such as furniture, books and computers. Moreover, the school grounds are in the process of being developed on a large scale for play and learning.

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As a result of the inspection on 15 and 16 March 2007, the school was asked to do the following:

- Improve provision in the Foundation Stage.
- Ensure that middle managers are enabled to play a more active role in monitoring their areas of responsibility.
- Raise the quality of teaching and learning to good or better in all areas of the school.

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

The accommodation and general resources for learning in the Foundation Stage have changed completely since the last inspection, when provision was judged as being inadequate. Since September 2007, the unit has been led and managed jointly by the two teachers in Reception. This tier of leadership did not exist before. As a result of their effective work, the quality of teaching has improved well, particularly for the oldest children. Visits to other schools to observe good practice and an improved system for assessing children's achievements have had a beneficial effect.

Improvements in learning have been more rapid in Reception because it is here that the school has concentrated its efforts. Provision for role play is now vastly improved in Reception: it allows children to enjoy and learn from challenging and imaginative scenarios. The Nursery is well resourced but there has not yet been time to create a fully unified approach with Reception. Notwithstanding the work still to do, children are making better progress in the Foundation Stage this year owing to the positive developments and the elimination of inadequate teaching.

The team of middle managers has changed almost entirely since September 2007. There are now leaders for each of the three key stages as well as subject coordinators; they all work alongside the headteacher and deputy headteacher with a clearly stated purpose of raising standards. Middle managers are far more active in monitoring all aspects of teaching and learning. For example, the team has observed lessons, evaluated pupils' work, interviewed pupils about their learning and collated results from various assessments. These activities have helped phase leaders and subject coordinators gain a useful overview of pupils' progress. A great deal of information has been accumulated. However, leadership at this level is not yet well versed in evaluating this information and then using the findings as a basis for further developments.

The work undertaken by senior and middle managers has had a positive effect on raising the quality of teaching and learning. There was some good and occasionally outstanding teaching at the time of the last inspection but it was the variation in quality across the school that was most in need of improvement. The satisfactory and occasional inadequate lessons often, for example, paid too little attention to involving pupils in the assessment and evaluation of their own learning. Since then, the school has gained the Investor in Pupils Award in recognition for its achievements in making sure that pupils know their targets and can help to judge their progress towards them. Generally, teaching promotes quicker progress in reading, writing and mathematics. Teachers' assessments are accurate and, in reading and writing, pupils understand what they need to do next. A start has been made at involving pupils in setting their targets for mathematics but this is not yet operating in every class. There is still some variation in the quality of teaching but it is more consistent than in March 2007. In the majority of lessons the most able pupils are challenged, however, this practice is not embedded in every class.

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

Yours sincerely

Roger Gill  
Additional Inspector