

Tribal Group
1-4 Portland
Square
Bristol
BS2 8RR
T 0845 123 6001
F 0845 123 6002

T 08456 40 40 40
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk



19 May 2008

Mr K Lacey
The Headteacher
Barley Croft Primary School
Malham Close
Beaumont Leys
Leicester
Leicestershire
LE4 0UT

Dear Mr Lacey

Ofsted monitoring of schools with a Notice to Improve

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 13 May 2008, for the time you gave to our phone discussions, and for the information which you provided before and during my visit. Please convey my thanks to all staff, pupils and governors.

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 12 and 13 November 2007, the school was asked to:

- ensure that teaching is consistently pitched at the right level for all pupils so that there is a better pace to learning and progress improves, especially in English
- ensure that assessments are accurate and are used sharply to identify the next steps in learning
- improve the use of information about how well pupils are doing to find out where there is underachievement and to set challenging targets.

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 the pupils' achievement.

Since the last inspection in November 2007, two teachers have been absent from school because of long term illness. Despite the best efforts of senior leaders, difficulty in securing supply teachers of suitable quality led initially to a deterioration in teaching and learning and the behaviour of some pupils, particularly in Year 6. This situation has now stabilised as a result of the combination of internal reorganisation and the appointment of long term supply teachers of appropriate calibre.

You have an accurate understanding of the overall quality of teaching and learning based on a regular cycle of lesson observations. You recognise that there is still variation in the quality of lessons but judge almost all to be satisfactory with around half good. Observation of literacy lessons during this visit confirms your judgement. The better teaching has clear lesson objectives, good pace, high expectations and well structured activities which match pupils' needs. Teaching assistants support individuals and small groups effectively, especially those who find it difficult to behave in class. Where the teaching is less effective, there is insufficient challenge for different groups of pupils. The pace slows during class question and answer sessions and teachers do not reinforce learning enough for those who need constant practice and repetition. Marking of pupils work is regular. However, although there are examples of good practice, opportunities are not always taken to give clear indications of what pupils need to do next to improve their work.

Detailed assessment data about pupils' progress is collected regularly and analysed thoroughly. Since the last inspection, assessments have become more robust and accurate. For example, the Foundation Stage profile results for the previous year have been relevelled to provide a more accurate starting point for pupils. Staff have worked with the local authority's mathematics consultant to analyse test results, and the outcomes have been successfully used to identify and systematically address areas of weakness. Class tracking sheets give a clear indication of progress made by pupils throughout the year and these, coupled with pupil tracking meetings, have been used to hold teachers to account for the achievement of pupils in their class. As a result, teachers are now better equipped to use assessment information in lessons to pitch work at the correct level for pupils. This is beginning to challenge many pupils and accelerate their progress. However, there is a need to increase the level of challenge for higher attaining pupils. A wide range of intervention programmes provides support for targeted pupils in literacy and numeracy in addition to their regular lessons.

The most recent school data shows steady improvement in most year groups, although pupils' speaking and listening, reading and writing skills continue to be below average. There remain significant gaps in pupils' knowledge and understanding. Many pupils have a limited vocabulary and experience of the world, and weaknesses in reading and writing continue to impede their progress. In addition, some pupils do not have clear or consistent strategies for accessing spellings, handwriting is poorly formed, and there is a lack of pride in presentation in some books.

The school has responded positively to the findings of the last inspection. There is a detailed and suitable action plan with relevant strategies for improving assessment, teaching, learning and pupils' achievement. A suitable balance of support and challenge has been provided by the local authority which has enabled the school to accept and address its previous shortcomings. The school's leadership has been assisted effectively by the appointment of new governors and by securing the practical help of a mentor headteacher from another school within the city. The

senior leadership team has been reorganised and broadened. Together, they are fully engaged in the monitoring and evaluation of their areas of responsibility, using outcomes to target improvement in the quality of teaching, rates of pupils' progress, and standard of attainment.

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

Yours sincerely

Paul Weston
Her Majesty's Inspector