

20 June 2008

Mr T Carter
Headteacher
Byron Wood Primary School
Earldom Road
Sheffield
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S4 7EJ

Dear Mr Carter

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 19 June 2008, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during my visit. I would also like to thank the staff and pupils who were particularly helpful.

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 April 2007, the school was asked to:

- improve the rate of progress in order to raise standards, particularly for the more able
- Ensure that the consistency of teaching is improved to the best
- improve attendance.

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.

Although standards are low, national published data point to an improving trend over recent years. The school's own data for 2008 indicate that this positive trend is continuing, with an increase in the number of pupils attaining the higher levels by the end of Year 6. Senior leaders have maintained a strong focus on improving pupils' achievement. Staff training in the use of data has led to teachers being more confident in their assessments of pupils' progress. The effective use of data by senior leaders means that the school has a detailed and improving overview of the progress being made by individual pupils. Achievement in relation to factors such as gender, ethnicity, learning difficulties and personal circumstances is very carefully considered, and consequently the targets set for pupils are better matched to their individual

needs. Tailored support, involving a range of skilled personnel, is helping to improve achievement and standards. Staff work with sensitivity and show high levels of awareness of pupils' individual needs. The school's work with the local community has developed since the previous inspection, and is a growing strength. Through close work with parents and external agencies, the school is striving to raise aspirations among local families; this, in turn, is beginning to have a positive impact in terms of improving pupils' achievement.

The school's monitoring of teaching and learning indicates that the proportion of good and outstanding teaching is increasing. Since the last inspection, an emphasis on meticulous lesson planning and the promotion of good quality assessment has contributed to improvements in classroom practice. The highly practical content typical of most lessons effectively supports pupils' progress, in both academic work and personal development. Through the close monitoring of teaching, senior staff are better able to identify the training needs of individual staff and respond accordingly to address these needs. The use of support staff is a key strength of the school's work. Highly competent teaching assistants make a valuable contribution to pupils' learning. The work of staff in the school's 'Nurture Unit' is of particular note, and is a major factor in supporting the achievement of pupils in the unit. The success of this work has led to firm plans for the school to extend this initiative in order to meet the very specific needs of some older pupils. The school has recently reviewed its approach to curriculum planning to promote a theme- and topic-based approach, with clear links between subjects. This has been welcomed by staff and pupils alike, and in this sense has contributed to improvements in teaching and learning.

Attendance is affected greatly by the number of pupils joining and leaving the school at various stages during the academic year, this number being well above the national average. The school has implemented a number of strategies in order to improve attendance. The appointment of a dedicated member of staff with responsibility for monitoring attendance has helped the school to identify quickly where further action is needed in the case of specific pupils who fail to attend. Regular communication between school and home ensures that parents are fully informed about the importance of regular attendance. A system of rewards for groups and individuals with high attendance is beginning to show much success in encouraging children to come to school regularly, and there are early signs that, overall, attendance is improving.

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

Yours sincerely

Julie Price Grimshaw
Additional Inspector