

30 June 2009

Mrs Maggie Crooks  
Headteacher  
Burnley Casterton Primary School  
Thames Avenue  
Burnley  
Lancashire  
BB10 2PZ

Dear Mrs Crooks

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 29 June 2009, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during my visit. Please pass on my thanks to the pupils, staff and local authority adviser for speaking with me during the day.

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 November 2008, the school was asked to:

- raise achievement and standards in reading, writing and mathematics in Key Stage 1
- analyse assessment information more thoroughly to identify and take action to eliminate underachievement
- plan tasks and activities for lessons which will stimulate and challenge pupils of all abilities.

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.

Pupils enter the school with skills, knowledge and understanding that are lower than is typical for children of their age. Since the last inspection staff have worked hard to accelerate pupils' progress during Key Stage 1 and there are signs that this work is beginning to have an impact. The school's assessment data indicate that by the end of Key Stage 1 in 2009, pupils are reaching higher standards in reading, writing and mathematics than in the previous year. However, standards remain below average

and few pupils reach the higher Level 3. Progress during Year 2 is better than during Year 1 but overall progress continues to be slow. Many Year 1 pupils, for example, have not reached the challenging individual targets set for them in writing.

Standards reached in English by the end of Key Stage 2 in 2009 are similar to those reached in 2008, but from lower starting points at the beginning of Year 3. However, standards in mathematics have declined and too few pupils have made the expected progress since Key Stage 1. Standards in both English and mathematics remain below average. School data shows that progress during Key Stage 2 is improving but it is not yet rapid enough to counteract the legacy of underachievement, nor is it consistent across all subjects, classes and year groups.

Senior leaders have concentrated on monitoring standards, evaluating outcomes and setting priorities for improvement. They have focused staff on the importance of raising standards and achievement. New progress tracking systems have been established for both Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2. Half-termly assessments in reading, writing and mathematics have been completed and added to the electronic system. Senior leaders and class teachers are now better informed about the progress of individual pupils and the standards they have reached. Senior leaders hold individual meetings with class teachers to discuss individual pupils' progress at regular intervals, which is helping to improve accountability for outcomes. Assessment data is analysed to identify rates of progress in different classes and year groups and this information is beginning to be used to identify underachievement earlier and plan strategies to address it. School assessment data indicate that almost all pupils are making some progress and some are making better than expected progress, but overall progress is not yet rapid enough to counter historic underachievement.

Teachers are now making better use of assessment data to group pupils by ability and plan appropriate work. Planning for pupils with additional learning needs has been reviewed and individual education plans now make more use of short term targets set by class teachers. Teachers' planning and visits to lessons show that tasks of differing levels of difficulty and challenge are set for different groups. Better use is made of specific short term targets which pupils can work towards over a short period of time. However, pupils report that some work is still too easy. In some lessons, much work is teacher or teacher assistant led, and pupils have few opportunities to work independently for extended periods which would enable some, especially the more able, to achieve more and to make more rapid progress. Additional staff training is planned to provide teachers with more strategies to raise standards in writing. Marking policies have been revised recently. The new Key Stage 1 policy has been well received by pupils and includes clear pointers to what has been done well and ways to improve work. Marking in Key Stage 2 is of variable quality and the policy is to be evaluated shortly.

The school procedures for safeguarding learners do not meet current government requirements, and this is a priority for the school to address.

The local authority's statement of action includes appropriate support for the school in addressing the issues identified by the inspection. Good support has been provided to the school. As well as regular visits and advice from a specialist adviser, this has included primary consultants' input. For example, the primary strategy consultant has undertaken staff training on topics such as mathematics and literacy teaching, progress tracking and behaviour management. The special educational needs adviser is working with the school special educational needs coordinator to improve awareness of the range of intervention programmes available to tackle underachievement. Moderation of teachers' assessments is helping to improve teachers' confidence in their judgements and ensuring that standards are accurately assessed.

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

Yours sincerely

Ruth James  
Her Majesty's Inspector