

20 May 2009

Mrs J Rowland
Acting Headteacher
Eccleston CofE Primary School
Eaton Road
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CH4 9HD

Dear Mrs Rowland

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 19 May 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 governors, pupils and parents who gave up their time to talk to me on the day of the visit.

The substantive headteacher is on long-term leave of absence and you have been acting headteacher from January, 2009. You continue to teach the Year 5/6 class full-time. Two of the school's four teachers are on maternity leave. Their classes are being taught by teachers on temporary contracts.

As a result of the inspection on 9 and 10 April 2008, the school was asked to:

- raise the achievement of all pupils
- give pupils more responsibility in assessing their learning
- improve provision for Early Years Foundation Stage, especially the outdoor provision.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time the school is making inadequate progress, overall, in addressing the points for improvement. This visit has raised very serious concerns about the standard of education provided by the school and I am recommending a return visit.

The inspection report of April 2008 recognised the negative impact of staffing instability prior to the inspection. At the time of the inspection the issue appeared to be resolved and the school had a full complement of permanent staff. The issue has returned. At the time of the visit a half of the pupils are taught by temporary staff and you are both acting headteacher and full-time teacher of the Year 5/6 class,

covering the absence of the headteacher. The school is in a more fragile position than that reported in the 2008 inspection report.

The impact of the continuing instability can be seen in the results of the 2008 end of Key Stage 2 tests. The success predicted by the school's tracking systems did not materialise. Pupils did not do as well as expected and standards were average. For those pupils, many of whom were above average in their capabilities, this represents unsatisfactory achievement. A scrutiny of records of pupils' current progress shows good progress being made in the Reception class and in the Year 5/6 class. Results of the national end of Key Stage 2 tests this year are likely to be above average and represent satisfactory achievement. However, for pupils from Years 1 to 4, progress is unsatisfactory as too many pupils are not achieving their potential.

The provision for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage is of good quality. The children are benefiting from a period of staffing stability. Despite the awkwardness of the accommodation in this very ancient building, best use is made of all opportunities to provide a stimulating environment in which children learn through play and through more formal teaching, including good use of the outside spaces. Teaching is of good quality, skilfully creating opportunities for children to learn by starting from their own interests and enthusiasms. Teaching assistants make a good contribution and assessment is rigorous. Children are well-settled and happy. They are remarkably mature for their age, something the teaching recognises in providing tasks that build on their capacity to work well together.

In the main school, little progress has been made in making the most of the pupils' excellent behaviour, positive attitudes to learning and independence that were highlighted in the inspection report. Only in the oldest pupils' project work, of which they are very proud, can glimpses be seen of what they are capable of. Generally, in their day-to-day work, too little is expected of pupils. Teachers' expectations of the quality of pupils' work is too low, with too much that is not the pupils' best being accepted as good.

Parents are pleased that some stability has returned to the school at present after a period of great disruption to their children's education and to the school's leadership. They have full confidence in your leadership and are keen for the school to succeed. However, they are aware that the staffing situation is not resolved in the long-term and anxious that further disruption may lie ahead.

Overall, the present situation over leadership and management is inappropriate. There is a considerable amount of work to be done in raising the quality of teaching and learning within the school and in raising expectations of what pupils can achieve, particularly in the light of the pupils' excellent attitudes, behaviour and initiative. This requires a commitment to working with staff that is not compatible with a full-time teaching load. The school is carrying a significant deficit in its funding. The governing body, the local authority and the Diocese have worked with the school to secure the quality of education for pupils. To date they have had

limited success, but have plans to support you and stand ready to redouble their efforts.

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

Yours sincerely

Brian Padgett
Her Majesty's Inspector