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Mrs Helen Callaghan
Headteacher
Rawson School
Boothtown
Halifax
HX3 6PU

Dear Mrs Callaghan

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 24 November 2009, for the time your deputy headteacher gave to my phone call and for the information which you provided before and during my visit. Please also pass on my thanks to the pupils who gave up time to talk to me and to the senior members of staff and governors with whom I held discussions.

Over the last 12 months the headteacher has been absent due to illness for a significant amount of time. Although now back in school, she has resigned from her post and will leave at the end of December. During her absence the school was led and managed by the deputy headteacher and the senior leadership team supported by the local authority. The chair of governors has been in post for two months.

As a result of the inspection in November 2008, the school was asked to:

- ensure that the school complies fully with current Government requirements for safeguarding
- develop and implement a consistent assessment system to monitor children's progress through the Early Years Foundation Stage
- raise standards in mathematics in Key Stage 1, especially for boys
- analyse and use assessment information better to plan for pupils' differing learning needs, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, so that all groups of pupils achieve as they should.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time the school has made inadequate progress in making improvements and inadequate progress in demonstrating a better capacity for sustained improvement.

This visit has raised very serious concerns regarding the school's implementation of the statutory requirements for safeguarding pupils and I therefore recommend an unannounced return visit.

Pupils enjoy coming to school and say that they feel safe. They speak highly of the way in which adults look after them and help them with any concerns. They are particularly appreciative of the way in which any incidents of bullying are quickly dealt with.

At the time of the last inspection the school did not meet all the statutory government requirements for safeguarding children. Despite some improvements to the security of the building and the systems to record that accurate checks are made and recorded, the school still does not meet government requirements for ensuring that all adults that come into contact with children have undergone appropriate checks. This is the major reason for the judgement of inadequate progress in making improvements.

Pupils' achievement and the standards they reach remain similar to those at the time of the last inspection. Key Stage 1 pupils, particularly boys, did much better in the unvalidated 2009 mathematic tests than in the previous year. This indicates that the 2008 results were not typical and that pupils continue to perform above the national average in mathematics throughout the school. Leaders have put in place several initiatives to ensure that boys who underperformed in 2008 are now on track and these are working well. Setting of mathematics lessons in Key Stage 2 is popular with pupils and staff alike and contributes well to the progress made in this subject. Leaders were surprised at the relatively weak performance in science in the 2009 end of Year 6 national tests. The curriculum had been modified to make science lessons more interesting and engaging. However, this practical focus improved pupils' interest in the subject but not their test results. Subject leaders are reviewing this approach.

The deputy headteacher has established a more effective assessment system to monitor children's progress through the Early Years Foundation Stage. Staff have found it useful and are becoming increasingly competent in using it to establish a more accurate baseline to identify any potential underachievement. While it is not yet used consistently, it is having a clear impact on ensuring there is a more accurate approach to monitoring how well children achieve.

School leaders have spent time carefully considering the benefits of an electronic tracking system to more accurately analyse pupils' progress. The system is now in

place and is already providing useful information. Leaders agree that the next important stage is to put this assessment information into use to better inform future planning to ensure lessons contain work that meets the needs of all learners.

During the prolonged absence of the headteacher, the remaining senior leaders attended a professional development course to enable them to develop their leadership skills. The success of this local authority initiative is evident in the way the team have been galvanised into a cohesive unit with a single purpose of improving the school. These leaders now have a 'common vision' and work extremely well together. Many new policies and procedures have been driven by this group and recent improvement is evident in many aspects of school life. Despite these encouraging signs, the school's capacity for sustained improvement has weakened since its last inspection. Self-evaluation is too descriptive and not sufficiently evaluative. The established systems for monitoring the quality of teaching and learning lack sufficient rigour to ensure the right things are being prioritised for improvement.

The local authority gives good support to the school through the School Improvement Partner and this is greatly appreciated by the deputy headteacher and subject coordinators.

I hope that you have found the visit helpful in promoting improvement in your school. This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Anthony Briggs
Lead inspector