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30 September 2009

Mrs Averil Culverhouse
Headteacher
Rawtenstall Newchurch CE Primary School
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Dear Mrs Culverhouse

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools

Thank you for the help which you gave when I inspected your school on 29 September, for the time you gave to our discussions and our joint observations and for the information which you provided during my visit. Please pass on my thanks to the staff and to the chair of governors for their time and courtesy.

Since the last inspection the school has undergone significant changes of staffing. The school was managed by an associate headteacher during the autumn term in 2008 and jointly by the associate headteacher and the acting deputy headteacher for the remainder of the school year. In addition, two new teachers have joined the school. I recognise that you only took up post this month and have had little time to make an impact upon the school. The views of the overwhelming majority of parents and pupils who responded to the questionnaire were very positive.

As a result of the inspection on 8 and 9 July 2008 the school was asked to

- raise the standards and achievement in science
- improve the marking of pupils' work and raise expectations of what pupils can achieve
- enhance the richness of opportunities for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage
- extend the monitoring and evaluating role of governors and subject leaders of science and mathematics.

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.

The key factor in the judgement of inadequate progress is that achievement and progress have declined in science and indeed in English and mathematics during the last academic year. The unvalidated results in the Key Stage tests in 2009 fell and, given the starting point of those pupils, this represented inadequate progress. School data shows that pupils' progress in the Key Stage 2 classes over the last year varied between subjects and for many was below national expectations. This continued the picture of inadequate progress shown in the 2008 data. Standards remain low but in lessons observed pupils are now making satisfactory progress. This progress is not sufficient to eradicate, in the short term, the history of underachievement during previous years. In lessons, pupils apply themselves to the tasks set but not always with sufficient rigour and enthusiasm to make consistently good progress. In a practical lesson pupils showed that they can work enthusiastically, co-operating well and showing real enjoyment of their learning. Pupils have good relationships with staff and behave well. They enjoy coming to school and feel safe knowing that there is always someone to turn to if they have any concern.

Teaching is satisfactory. Teachers plan lessons with a range of activities to meet the different needs of pupils. However, these do not always fully meet the needs of all pupils sufficiently to engage their complete interest. The pace of learning is at times not sufficiently brisk to allow good progress to be made. The provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage remains satisfactory but thoughtful planning is beginning to enrich the learning experiences of the children and to make better use of the outdoor facilities.

Assessment is increasingly being used to aid planning and to provide pupils with clear targets for improvement, but this process is not fully embedded across the school. You have established a new marking policy and this is beginning to bring about improvement. The best marking provides pupils with detailed guidance on what they have done well and what they must do to make further progress. However, this quality of marking is not consistently evident across all subjects and year groups. A tracking system has been put in place to monitor the progress of pupils and to ensure that intervention is available when required, but this is not yet in full operation.

The school has extended the role of subject co-ordinators and they have begun to monitor planning, teaching and pupils' work. This is not yet fully in place across all

core subjects, but there are plans to address this. Individual governors are establishing links with specific subjects and areas to extend their understanding of the school. However, the role of the governors in formally monitoring and evaluating the school remains underdeveloped.

The school has yet to update its self evaluation of its effectiveness. This reflects the instability of leadership over the past year and your very recent arrival at the school. However, you have correctly identified the areas for improvement and have put in place plans to address them. Your determination to bring about improvement is impressive. Despite this, the early stage of the implementation of these plans and the lack of clear trends of improvement in key areas since the last inspection means that there is insufficient evidence to prove that the capacity for improvement has been increased. It will take time for there to be clear evidence of improvement in provision and outcomes. The school must now strengthen its processes for monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching and act to strengthen teaching to ensure that pupils make sufficiently good progress to eradicate previous underachievement. You must also rigorously implement the assessment, marking and tracking policies.

The local authority has provided interim management for the school that effectively stabilised its position. It has also provided support from consultants to lay the basis for more effective teaching, but the impact of this is not consistently evident in lessons. There is a clear commitment from the authority to support you in your new role and they are confident that you will succeed.

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

Mr Garry Jones
Her Majesty's Inspector