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Ms Sue Holland  
The Headteacher  
Bishop Lonsdale C of E VC Primary School  
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Dear Ms Holland

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 9 February 2010, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during my visit. Pass on my thanks to the teachers who organised the scrutiny of work in Years 3 to 6 and to those teachers and pupils who were observed. I would also like to thank the mathematics and science leaders for finding time to talk to me about their work and its impact.

Since the last inspection in February 2008, there have been the following contextual changes. The number on roll has continued to decline and consequently the number of teachers has reduced. The school is now one form entry and all classes have single rather than mixed age groups. A new Year 2 teacher was appointed in January 2010 and a long term part time supply teacher works in Year 3. Governors are in discussion with the local authority to determine whether the school continues to be located on a split-site or not. The headteacher will be retiring at the end of the summer term 2010. Governors are in the process of appointing a successor. The vice-chair of governors has stepped up to become the chair of governors.

As a result of the inspection on 20 February 2008, the school was asked to:

- Raise standards in mathematics and science in Key Stage 2, ensuring pupils have enough opportunities for investigative work.
- Raise the quality of teaching and learning, ensuring lesson activities and targets consistently challenge all ability groups to do well.
- Check teaching and pupils' progress more closely in Years 3 to 6 to ensure that timely support and guidance can be provided where they are most needed.



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

Standards at the end of Years 2 and 6 have been above average for the past two years. Attainment in English and mathematics has been static over this period but in science pupils' attainment is rising. The whole school targets set for Year 6 in 2009 were not met. The targets set for 2010 are suitably challenging. Pupils' overall achievement is satisfactory but inconsistent in Years 3 to 6. For example, last academic year the oldest pupils' progress in science was good but their progress in mathematics and English was satisfactory. Pupils' progress in science is accelerating because teaching is more effective and the revised programme of study has improved the continuity and coherence of learning. The rate at which pupils acquire knowledge skills and understanding is too variable. This is because teaching is not of consistently good quality to ensure pupils make good progress in the core subjects. Lesson planning is inconsistent. Medium term planning does not specify clearly enough the level of work being done by different groups of pupils.

The teaching of mathematics in Year 6 is effective because expectations as to what pupils can achieve are high and work is matched to most pupils' capabilities. In contrast, assessment information is not being used effectively enough in mathematics lessons in Years 3 and 4, to ensure work is pitched at the right level so all pupils are challenged. In the lessons seen in these two year groups, pupils were consolidating their learning rather than learning new things. On occasions, mathematical concepts are not taught securely and this leads to confusion. At times individuals or groups are given work that is either too hard or too easy. Some activities are mundane and do not stimulate pupils' interest or increase their enjoyment of learning. This said, pupils work diligently on the tasks given and concentrate and behave well. Most pupils know what their literacy and numeracy targets are, but many are unclear what National Curriculum level they are working at. No science targets are given to identify what must be improved.

Practical investigative work is regularly done in science and pupils say they enjoy working independently on enquiry activities. In the Year 5 science lesson observed pupils undertook a worthwhile experiment that extended their understanding of condensation and evaporation through first-hand experience. Too many commercial worksheets are used in science which restricts opportunities for pupils to record things for themselves. Investigative mathematics games are sent home each week to encourage pupils and their families to work together on problem-solving activities that extend pupils' learning. The activities have proved successful and parents have welcomed being involved in their children's mathematical development. Work scrutiny reveals that investigative work in mathematics is too infrequent and does not build upon the interesting activities done at home.

Senior and middle leaders are involved in monitoring teaching and learning but it is not robust enough. Evaluations of provision do not occur often enough. When they

do happen, the strengths and weaknesses in provision are not clearly identified. The remedying of weaknesses is not systematic enough. A progress tracking system has been introduced but it is not sharp enough. This means that underachievement is not quickly pinpointed and eradicated. The school has sound procedures for moderating standards in writing but lacks them in reading, mathematics and science. This means there is no secure baseline of attainment from which to track pupils' progress over time. The school is not using a wide enough range of measures to evaluate pupils' attainment at the end of the academic year.

All staff, supply teachers, volunteers and governors have been appropriately vetted to ensure their suitability to work with children. However, the single central register does not contain all of the required information. Who carried out Criminal Record Bureau vetting and identity checks is not specified. Qualifications checks have not been done on all staff.

Local authority input to improve teachers' science expertise and the science curriculum has proved beneficial and is helping to raise standards. The school improvement partner reports provide accurate information about the standards achieved. Improvement since the last inspection has been mixed and while standards are rising in science, and some provision is improving, too much teaching is satisfactory and not enough is good. While the school's capacity to sustain improvement is satisfactory, there is still a way to go in addressing the remaining areas of weakness in teaching, learning and leadership.

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

David Rzeznik  
Her Majesty's Inspector