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Mrs L Young  
Headteacher  
Preston Primary School  
Station Road  
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Dear Mrs Young

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 3 February 2010 and for the information which you provided before and during my visit. I found the on-site preparation on the afternoon of the 2 February most helpful and I thank you for giving time to this at such short notice. Please pass on my thanks to the vice-chair of governors, pupils and staff for talking to me and to the chair of governors for attending the feedback meeting. I scrutinised evidence provided by the school, conducted formal lesson observations in five classes, briefly visited three other classes and looked at some pupils' work in books.

As a result of the inspection on 30 September and 1 October 2009, the school was asked to:

- ensure that safeguarding procedures across the school are secure
- raise standards at the end of Year 2, particularly at the higher levels
- ensure that leaders and managers drive school improvement by checking pupils' progress is good in every class, holding all teachers to account for the progress of pupils in their class, involving governors more in monitoring and evaluating and doing more to promote pupils' understanding of diverse communities
- improve the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage by planning more challenging activities to extend children's learning and ensuring assessments are accurate and reliable to inform future planning.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time the school is making good progress in addressing the issues for improvement and in raising pupils' achievement.

Safeguarding now has a much higher profile and very clear lines of management responsibilities have been established. This includes the appointment of a governor with designated responsibility who has a very good knowledge of the safeguarding requirements. Governors are now in a much better position to hold the school to account. A thorough audit of safeguarding procedures has taken place. New practices have been introduced and practices already in place at the last inspection have been tightened considerably. All associated policies have been reviewed and updated where necessary. Although it was not a specific requirement, all staff have updated their training. The monitoring of the safeguarding procedures is more robust. There is also evidence of more regular risk assessments and examples where some practice has already been evaluated and amended to increase the effectiveness. Relevant policies have been sent home to parents so they are aware of new procedures, for example, the medicines policy, the delivery and collection of children policy and e-safety. During the visit the delivery of children was smooth and efficient and well supervised by school staff. Pupils could explain in detail the new procedures for administering medicines when at school and recognised the improvements to the site security. The required record of checks on adults' suitability to work with children is up to date and complete and meets statutory requirements. The school has worked speedily to have new fences erected to increase the security of the site. The school is no longer in breach of its statutory requirements in relation to safeguarding.

Since the last inspection senior leaders have given an even sharper focus to the monitoring of teaching and learning. In the one or two classes where teaching was weakest, there is now a better awareness of how well pupils are doing and of the levels they should have reached by the time they move to the next class. Teachers are more accountable for the progress of the pupils in their classes. Senior leaders have been effective in improving the quality of teaching. Those teachers involved have benefited from observing good practice both within school and in other schools and are responding positively to the support given. As a result, the expectations of what pupils can achieve are higher, better use is made of assessment to plan future learning and the management of pupils has improved. However, there are still occasions when the pace of learning is not quick enough and pupils could achieve more in lessons. Evidence from the pupils' books indicates that progress is picking up. Work is presented better and pupils are producing more in terms of quality and quantity. It will, however, take some time for the improvements to influence the standards at the end of Year 2. The strong teaching highlighted at the last inspection in both key stages still exists as confirmed by the lessons seen during this visit. The most recent national data for 2009 show pupils' achievement at the end of Year 6 has improved over the last three years. Pupils' work in the current Year 6 and school data indicate the above average attainment continues and pupils are on track to meet challenging targets.

The school has made a positive start in establishing links with other schools, both nationally and internationally to promote pupils' understanding of diverse communities. Already, Year 5 pupils are linked with a school in Poland and are gaining an awareness of the similarities and differences between their own and Polish culture.

In the Early Years Foundation Stage much has been done to improve the accuracy of assessment data so that it now forms a more reliable benchmark from which to measure children's progress and plan future learning. Staff have observed examples of good practice in other schools and received support from the local authority. Improvements have been made to planning the curriculum. Staff are making regular assessments and are now using the information to plan activities which better match children's abilities, particularly for the directed activities. Children have opportunities to make their own choices to play and explore independently, but these activities often lack a clear purpose and provide insufficient challenge. As a result, there are times when some children make little gains in their knowledge and skills. Although staff do question children about their work, this is not done skilfully enough to extend their thinking and speaking skills or to take their learning forward at a quick pace. Aspects in relation to safeguarding and children's welfare have been dealt with effectively.

The local authority's statement of action was amended satisfactorily to meet requirements. The local authority has provided effective support particularly in resolving the issues related to safeguarding. It is aware that the Early Years Foundation Stage would benefit from more focused support.

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

Brenda McIntosh  
Additional inspector