

20 May 2010

Mr T Walker
Headteacher
Burnside Primary School
Burnside Estate
Houghton le Spring
Tyne and Wear
DH4 5HB

Dear Mr Walker

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 the 19 May, and for the information which you provided during my visit. Please, also, convey my thanks to those governors and staff who gave up some of their time to talk with me, and to the many pupils who spoke so confidently to me in lessons.

Since the inspection in November 2009, the school has appointed a new lead teacher for the Early Years Foundation Stage. The current headteacher is retiring at the end of this term and one member of staff will soon be absent from school while on maternity leave. There have also been some changes to the composition of the governing body, with three new appointees; one of whom is now the Chair of the Governing body.

As a result of the inspection on 4 and 5 November 2009, the school was asked to:

- improve the safety of pupils by ensuring that:
 - government guidelines are scrupulously followed with relation to the employment of staff
 - all relevant and required safeguarding policies are in place, clearly up to date and ratified by the governing body
 - governors are fully aware of statutory requirements and their duties
- establish coherent leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage to provide clear educational direction, give more effective support for teaching and to ensure that all statutory requirements are met
- improve standards and pupils' achievement by:
 - providing work in lessons for all pupils that is sufficiently challenging and relevant to their needs
 - devising a curriculum that makes learning in lessons more meaningful and diverse



- strengthen self-evaluation procedures by ensuring that:
 - all analyses of the school's work have an appropriate balance of strengths and weaknesses
 - development plans are clearly based on such analyses, linked very specifically to outcomes for pupils and monitored more rigorously by senior staff and governors.

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

The overall profiles for pupils' achievement and progress are broadly satisfactory. Although the school has acted on the weaknesses in pupils' performance shown in the 2009 national tests and teacher assessments, this year's attainment and progress are likely to be very similar to the previous year.

The school has successfully addressed all the issues regarding safeguarding that were identified in the previous inspection. The single central record complies fully with the regulations and all aspects relating to the welfare requirements in the Early Years Foundation Stage have been met. Governance now includes a forward plan for review and approval of all major policies, including the statutory ones relating to the safeguarding of the children.

The school has made satisfactory progress in developing a more coherent approach to the leadership and management of the Early Year Foundation Stage. The newly appointed lead teacher is well aware of what needs to be done and the recent developments in planning, assessment and links with parents are already helping to improve the overall provision.

Although the quality of teaching remains satisfactory, as it was at the time of the previous inspection, progress is being made in some important areas. For example, there are very good working relationships in lessons, good classroom organisation and management, and a move towards more consistent marking of pupils' work. However, more needs to be done in identifying pupils' learning outcomes in teachers' planning, rather than just a list of intended tasks. Also, all teachers should strive for more independent pupil learning in lessons by reducing the time spent on whole-class discussions. The school has made satisfactory progress in developing its curriculum, within which there remains a major emphasis on the teaching of key literacy and numeracy skills.

Satisfactory progress has been made in improving the overall quality of leadership and management. There is now a clearer process for evaluating and monitoring the work of the school, including regular lesson observations and targeted areas for individual teacher improvement. Additionally, the role for governors has developed well in helping to assess accurately the quality and impact of the school's provision



on pupils' learning and their rate of progress. Overall, therefore, the school's capacity for continued improvement is satisfactory.

The local authority's action plan accurately meets the need of the school, with very good quality support provided since the previous inspection. There are regular visits from link officers and specialist support staff, all of whom have helped the school focus effectively on the key areas for improvement.

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

Brian G Blake
Her Majesty's Inspector