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13 May 2010

Mrs G Whittingham  
Acting Headteacher  
Brunel Nursery School  
Cambridge Street  
Blackburn  
Lancashire  
BB1 1ES

Dear Mrs Whittingham

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 12 May 2010 and for the information which you provided during my visit. Please pass on my thanks to the headteacher at St Matthews CE Primary School and to the governor who accompanied her for agreeing to talk to me at short notice.

The arrangements for the federation of Brunel Nursery and St Matthews CE Primary are proceeding according to plan. The schools will have a single headteacher and a single governing body from September 2010. The construction of a Early Years Foundation Stage Unit incorporating Brunel Nursery and the Reception class of St Matthews is underway and a Early Years Foundation Stage leader has been appointed. You will remain as acting headteacher of the Nursery to 31 August 2010 in order to ensure a smooth transition for Brunel as it moves to federation.

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

- ensure that statutory requirements for safeguarding and child protection are met
- ensure that statutory requirements for community cohesion are met
- develop further, for those children who are ready, their skills in early reading and writing and early calculation.

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 children's achievement.



The inspection report of November 2009 acknowledged that children made good progress in their early reading, writing and number work. However, progress in children's learning about letters and sounds and in the beginnings of calculation was not as good as in other aspects. The school has responded promptly and effectively to close this gap in children's achievement. It can demonstrate clear gains in children's knowledge and understanding of letters and sounds. Children's levels of development in this aspect now match expectations for children of this age. This represents much better progress, as a high proportion of children begin Nursery with little or no English. An emphasis on improving children's knowledge and understanding of early calculation has not, to date, resulted in measurable improvement. However, staff have identified that children lack the facility with the language of calculation and this is a barrier to their understanding. They, therefore, now build in frequent use of the specific language of calculation within their daily work.

The school's arrangements for safeguarding and child protection have been strengthened significantly and now meet the requirements. Staff and key governors have undertaken training at an appropriate level depending upon their responsibility for protecting children. Clear policies and systems for keeping records are in place. The cooption of additional governors and the arrangements for interim governance as the federation proceeds has increased the knowledge and expertise available to the governing body. The governing body now meets its statutory requirements in this respect.

The school has made progress towards meeting its duties to promote community cohesion. A policy to promote community cohesion has been passed by the governing body. The school's knowledge of the local community is already good. Staff continue to promote equality and respect for diversity within the Nursery. The local authority has stepped up its support for the school by providing additional opportunities for children to learn about the range of cultures within the authority through art and music. As yet, the school has not drawn up an action plan to specifically promote community cohesion, or put in place the means of checking the effectiveness of its actions through governance.

The action plan provided by the local authority to support the school following the inspection was deficient in several respects. Each deficiency has been resolved satisfactorily, with one exception. Although the local authority helped the school to draw up a letter informing parents and carers of the consequences of the inspection, it did not of itself explain its position or make arrangements to listen to and take account of the views of parents and carers.

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 Padgett  
Her Majesty's Inspector

