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22 October 2007

Mrs F McGowan
The Headteacher
Elland Church of England Junior and Infant School
Westgate
Elland
West Yorkshire
HX5 0BB

Dear Mrs McGowan

Ofsted monitoring of schools with a notice to improve

Thank you for the help that you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 18 October 2007, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during my visit. I appreciated the amount of time and effort staff and pupils gave to help me find out about the school.

This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website. Please inform the Regional Inspection Service Provider of any factual inaccuracies within 24 hours of the receipt of this letter.

As a result of the inspection on 14 and 15 February 2007, the school was asked to:

- raise standards and achievement by the end of Key Stage 2 in all subjects
- improve the quality and consistency of teaching and learning in Key Stage 2 to ensure that all pupils make sufficient progress
- ensure that assessment information on pupils' attainment is used effectively in Key Stages 1 and 2 to enable pupils of all abilities to be suitably challenged in their learning.

In addition, the procedures for safeguarding learners did not meet current government requirements.

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.

The school is focusing more sharply on raising standards. Provisional national test results for 2007 for Year 6 are above those of 2006 in the percentage of pupils achieving Level 4, the expected level, in English, mathematics and science. There were marked improvements in mathematics and science, showing increases of 17% and 21% respectively. Targets were raised and exceeded. The percentage of pupils achieving the higher Level 5 was not as high as in 2006 for English and mathematics

but higher in science. Currently, too few pupils reach the higher levels expected of them for their age in Key Stages 1 and 2. The school rightly sees this as a priority.

Overall achievement is helped because teachers have a sharper focus on how well pupils are learning. The school and local authority have carried out a joint review of teaching and learning. Observations were detailed and included points for development. Joint observations have been moderated against set criteria so that the school has a more accurate picture of the quality of teaching. This shows that teaching and learning continue to strengthen, a view confirmed by lesson observations during the monitoring visit. The school recognises that some weaknesses remain and provides support programmes for individual staff. Lessons are more focused on specific learning objectives and outcomes and work is becoming more closely matched to pupils' needs. There are, however, still occasions when tasks are inappropriate and provide insufficient challenge for all groups of pupils. Pupils speak positively about more interesting lessons, being more actively involved in their learning and having time to think things through for themselves.

Procedures for assessing and tracking pupils' progress are more systematic and robust. Improved use is made of assessment information to meet pupils' differing abilities. The school's data indicates that pupils now make better progress in lessons and over time. Pupils' progress towards their targets is now regularly checked so that any slippages are spotted and addressed quicker. Initiatives to involve pupils in evaluating their own work are currently being trialled.

The local authority is providing good support. There is a good balance between monitoring and giving advice and this is helping to develop the role of the subject leaders. The joint review has been successful in helping the school to make more accurate judgements about the quality of teaching and learning and in providing support to improve teachers' skills and raise expectations.

The headteacher has brought stability to the leadership and a renewed energy to the drive for improvement. Common practices for monitoring and evaluating performance are strengthening. There is a clearer focus on improving pupils' progress. Strategies for raising standards and achievement are being tackled on a wide front, including steps to involve parents more closely. Actions to improve attendance are continuing to be effective with levels on an upward trend over recent months. Pupils speak positively about new reward systems that encourage good behaviour. In the lessons observed pupils behaved well and showed positive attitudes to learning. Much work has been done to improve the science curriculum giving a stronger emphasis to investigation and practical work. All these important features contribute positively to the improvements seen in pupils' achievements.

Safeguarding procedures now meet the current government requirements.

I hope that you have found the visit helpful in promoting improvement in your school.

Yours sincerely
Brenda McIntosh
Additional Inspector