

PROTECT-INSPECTION

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Mr Kevin Lacey
Barley Croft Primary School
Malham Close
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Leicester
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Dear Mr Lacey

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools: monitoring inspection of Barley Croft Primary School

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on Thursday 4 November 2010, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during the inspection. Please pass on my thanks to the chair and vice chair of the governing body, who made themselves available at short notice, and also pupils and those teachers observed during lessons, as well as the staff and parents spoken to during the visit. The central record of suitability checks on staff was scrutinised and it meets the current government requirements.

There have been significant staff changes since the school's last inspection. At the time of the visit the school was undergoing substantial refurbishment which has displaced Key Stage 2 pupils and children in the Early Years Foundation Stage into temporary classrooms until further building work is completed.

As a result of the inspection on 10 February 2009, the school was asked to address the most important areas for improvement which are set out in the annex to this letter.

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

Although attainment remains low in English and below average in mathematics, the coordinated efforts of the staff are raising standards. As at the time of the last inspection, most children join the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills and aptitudes that are well below those expected of four-year-olds, and the mobility of pupils joining or leaving the school at different times is high. These are significant barriers to raising attainment which the school is addressing through effective

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leadership, improved teaching and learning and more consistent use of assessment and learning targets. Pupils continue to make satisfactory progress in reading, writing and mathematics, with accelerated progress being made in Years 5 and 6, particularly in mathematics, where standards are edging closer towards those expected of pupils nationally at the end of Year 6.

The headteacher has strengthened the teaching through carefully considered appointments and changes to staff responsibilities. Senior staff now engage in more widespread and systematic monitoring of lessons and pupils' work. As a result, teachers' planning has improved and incorporates more specific tasks for pupils of different abilities. However, teachers tend to over-direct or spend too much time talking to pupils, leaving less time for them to learn independently. Learning targets are now set more consistently across classes and, increasingly, are being refined in teachers' planning to meet the needs of the more able or those close to age-related levels. Teachers have adopted a consistent marking system to help pupils improve their work and understand the next steps to their learning. However, the work set for pupils is not always challenging enough so that some just fall short of their expected learning targets the next time these are reviewed.

Pupils' behaviour in lessons has improved and they are coping well with the temporary disruption caused by refurbishment work. In lessons, they are encouraged to cooperate with their 'talk partners' or share their thoughts in groups, which ensure that they contribute or generate their own ideas. Sharper monitoring of lessons has helped to improve the effectiveness of support staff who are assigned to pupils who find learning difficult. Teachers plan their work carefully to involve teaching assistants more in supporting pupils with behavioural difficulties. However, too much over-direction or tasks that do not expect enough of pupils leads to some minor disruptive behaviour. The pupils spoken to during the inspection stated that they enjoy learning and, as one pupil put it, 'Teachers always help us.' These sentiments reflect the warm and positive relationships that exist between staff and pupils, views that also correspond with those expressed by some parents and carers.

The local authority advisory team and school improvement partner have provided satisfactory support. Regular visits combined with systematic reviews have helped to keep the school on a consistent course of improvement. This has also helped to increase the school's capacity for sustained improvement as subject leaders and senior staff are taking more responsibility for evaluating the school's performance.

I hope that you have found the inspection helpful in promoting improvement in your school. This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Charalambos Loizou
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in February 2009.

- Improve the quality of learning by ensuring that the small steps which successfully build upon pupils' levels of skills and knowledge are planned carefully for pupils of all abilities, especially the more able.
- Develop the monitoring and evaluating skills of all leaders.
- Ensure that the support for pupils with behavioural difficulties does not detract from the learning of other pupils.
- Ensure that pupils' targets for improvement are part of their daily learning.