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12 Apr 2011

Mr P Sturgess  
Headteacher  
Bowness Primary School  
Church Street  
Little Lever  
Bolton  
Lancashire  
BL3 1BT

Dear Mr Sturgess,

### **Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools: monitoring inspection of Bowness Primary School**

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 12 April 2011, 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 pupils, staff, Chair and vice-chair of the Governing Body and the School Improvement Partner who gave up time to talk to me.

The headteacher has been absent from school since December 2010. The school is currently led and managed by a consultant headteacher working in partnership with the deputy headteacher. A newly qualified teacher took up post in January 2011. A class teacher is absent from school and the class is being taught by a supply teacher.

As a result of the inspection on 3 February 2010, 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.

Analysis of the school's data and evidence from lessons observed and from pupils' work indicates that, after dipping in 2010, pupils' achievement is now improving. Attainment, although below average, is rising. The school responded quickly to weak results in mathematics in 2010 and, with the help of the local authority, put measures in place that are raising standards. Informative training, some of which was provided by the local authority, has increased teachers' knowledge and understanding and helped them to improve their lessons. Although the last inspection identified writing as an area for improvement, the school took mathematics as its first priority. As a result of significant staffing issues and the concerted effort needed to raise standards in mathematics, writing has had to wait until now to become a main focus of subject development. Despite this, improvements are evident, particularly in pupils' better use of language to make their

January 2011



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

writing more interesting and enjoyable to read. Pupils' understanding of their individual targets and how to use them has improved. They explain their targets confidently and know to refer to them before starting a piece of work. However, mistakes in spelling, punctuation and grammar reduce the quality of many pupils' writing. Opportunities for pupils to apply their writing skills in other subjects have been increased, and classroom walls are decorated with accounts and reports pupils have written in history and design and technology. Pupils appreciate the information teachers provide when marking their work and find the points for improvement they include very useful. In some lessons, pupils are asked to evaluate each others' work, which is increasing their independence as learners and raising their awareness of the importance of self-evaluation. Positive steps have been taken to raise standards in writing but these do not yet constitute a fully coordinated approach.

The lessons observed indicate that, despite the staffing instability, the quality of teaching remains similar to that at the last inspection. In all the lessons seen relationships between staff and pupils were positive and classrooms were calm and orderly. Activities were carefully considered although at times opportunities to challenge the most able were not fully utilised. Lessons had a clearly defined and appropriate structure so that pupils knew what was expected of them and how to go about it. Levels of concentration were good and pupils worked with enthusiasm and interest. The contribution made by the teaching assistants was inconsistent. Some led groups or supported individual pupils with purpose and skill, but others showed less understanding of their role and did not interact with the pupils well enough. A review of the work and responsibilities of teaching assistants is currently under way. Provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage has improved. As a result, children are making better progress and the number who attain the targets for their age by the end of reception has risen.

The governing body has become more involved in evaluating the work of the school and measuring the effects that actions are having on outcomes for pupils. Many members of the governing body have attended training in school evaluation and a well-structured action plan is in place. Some of the objectives the plan contains have already been met well but others, designed to increase governors' involvement in strategic decision making, have still to be completed. Subject leaders have adopted a more measured approach to checking how well pupils are achieving and regularly report their findings to the governing body. This has improved the quality of information available to the school but, in some subjects, assessment of pupils' progress is not yet fully reliable

During the headteacher's absence the deputy headteacher, working with several consultant headteachers and with the support of the local authority, has ensured that the school focuses on its most pressing priorities and runs smoothly day to day. A rigorous support plan is in place, overseen by a Collaborative Working Group made up of senior staff, the governing body and officers from the local authority. As part of this plan, and for the foreseeable future, a consultant headteacher from a successful local school will continue to play a leading role in the management of the school and a close working relationship between the two schools is becoming established. The School Improvement Partner is a regular visitor to school, monitoring its progress closely, offering advice for improvement

and providing training for development. The staffing instability of the school caused staff morale to fall but this has now recovered and throughout the school a positive atmosphere prevails. Pupils go about their work with smiles on their faces and clearly enjoy what the school provides for them.

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

Mr Keith Bardon  
**Additional Inspector**

## **Annex**

### **The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in February 2010.**

- Improve pupils' attainment in writing by:
  - ensuring that there is a consistent approach across the school to using learning targets so that pupils have clear goals to aim for
  - ensuring that there are consistently planned opportunities in all classes for pupils to apply their writing skills.
  
- Improve the effectiveness of governors and subject leaders by ensuring that they are fully involved in checking the impact of actions taken to improve pupils' outcomes.