

Suite 22 West Lancs
Investment Centre
Maple View
Skelmersdale
WN9 9TG

T 08456 40 40 40
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk

Direct T 01695 566930
Direct F 01695 729320

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Mr David Lloyd
Bolton by Bowland CE
Gisburn Road
Bolton by Bowland
Clitheroe
Lancashire
BB7 4NP

Dear Mr Lloyd

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on Thursday 10th December, for the time you gave to our phone discussion and for the information which you provided before and during my visit. Please pass on my thanks to your staff and pupils for the welcome they gave me and to your chair of governors and School Improvement Partner who came to meet with me.

As a result of the inspection on 25th November 2008, the school was asked to:

- improve teaching by enabling pupils to take more responsibility for their own learning and make better use of marking to set high standards
- refine the way in which the curriculum is planned, so that pupils have more opportunities to write and get involved in investigative activities
- strengthen the procedures for monitoring pupils' performance so that any who are underachieving make the progress of which they are capable.

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

The 2009 Key Stage 2 results were much better than those in 2008. They represent good levels of attainment and good progress from pupils' starting points. English and science results have improved. Girls' attainment is better than that of boys. However, the progress pupils make in attaining the higher Level 5, particularly in mathematics was disappointing. Monitoring of attainment and progress and the quality of teaching and learning has been given a higher priority.

The amount of good teaching has increased since the last inspection. As a result, the proportion of pupils making good progress in their learning has increased.



Observations of lessons, scrutiny of planning and pupils' books confirm these improvements. Teaching activities are now structured by age group and this has improved pupils' self-esteem. Pupils have been given more responsibility for their own learning. They have a greater choice of activities, which are designed to offer different levels of challenge. Pupils enjoy these purposeful learning activities, which are appropriately planned and supported by teaching teams of age-phase teachers and teaching assistants. Sometimes progress slows when pupils have to sit and listen for too long, or when whole-class starters do not meet the needs of all of the age groups in each class. Teachers are beginning to make more regular checks on pupils' learning. Planning is not always as tightly focused as it should be on pupils' next step learning needs, to maximise the progress pupils make and ensure that they all fulfil their potential. Teachers' marking has improved. It is now more detailed in relation to pupils' writing. Specific assessment guidance is being effectively used to set high expectations and create realistic targets for pupils' next steps in learning. This approach has given pupils a better understanding of where they are in their own learning and what they need to do to improve.

The curriculum now provides an enhanced entitlement and a creative and holistic experience for pupils. It is well planned, builds on a number of current initiatives and is based on a meaningful and investigative skills-based approach, with an enhanced emphasis on the development of basic skills. Pupils say they particularly enjoy the visits made out of school. One pupil stated that learning was now 'more fun although it wasn't any easier'. Inspection evidence confirms that pupils are responding well to the higher expectations and new challenges created, including the increased responsibility for their own learning and the greater number of opportunities to write across all areas of the curriculum.

More manageable tracking and target setting systems are now in place. These enable teachers to identify pupils who are not making sufficient progress so that they can be targeted for extra help and support. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who are high achievers are now more accurately identified and appropriate provision is being made for them. The school has recognised the need to provide more challenge for higher achieving pupils.

The school has responded positively to the issues identified at its inspection in November 2008. There is a strong, shared commitment to improvement. Great care has been taken to inform parents and governors about the changes that have been made and why they were necessary. The capacity for sustained improvement is strengthening as seen in improved outcomes for pupils. The quality of teaching and the amount of progress pupils make in their learning has improved. The headteacher has a very accurate picture of the school's strengths and weaknesses and what needs to be done to secure the necessary improvements. Issues have been tackled with rigour and enthusiasm. The headteacher has worked hard to establish effective teamwork, accurate assessment and tracking systems from which to measure pupils' performance accurately and to change the culture of learning in the school. Teachers and teaching assistants have gained from staff development activities e.g. The Big



Write and assessment of pupils' performance (APP). Opportunities to share expertise and practice with colleagues from another local primary school, as a result of the collaborative arrangements and joint headship, have proved particularly valuable.

The school has benefited from good levels of support and challenge from the School's Improvement Partner. His reports are incisive and make clear the strengths of the school and what must be done to make further progress. Governors are closely involved in monitoring and evaluating the work of the school, providing effective challenge and support.

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

Angela Milner
Her Majesty's Inspector

