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Mrs Naila Zaffar
Executive Headteacher
Lapage Primary School and Nursery
Barkerend Road
Bradford
BD3 8QX

Dear Mrs Zaffar,

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 10 February 2010, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during my visit. Please also pass on my thanks to the chair of interim executive board, staff, the local authority representative and the groups of pupils who gave up some of their time to meet with me and my colleague.

There have been some changes to the school's context since the previous inspection in March 2008. An interim executive board (IEB) has replaced the governing body. The IEB in partnership with the local authority (LA) has established a close working relationship between Lapage and another school in the city. There is an executive headteacher for both schools with a head of school at Lapage. This arrangement will end at the end of this academic year. There have also been some changes to senior leadership roles and the appointment of five new teachers. The IEB is in the process of recruiting a substantive headteacher for September 2010. There are currently five members of the teaching staff off work due to ongoing sickness absence. There has been substantial building work on the site because a new community special school is being built adjacent to the school and will share some of the school's facilities. During this work some Early Years Foundation Stage classes have been taught in temporary buildings and there has been only limited outdoor play space for the Nursery and Reception classes.

As a result of the inspection in March 2008, the school was asked to:

- raise achievement in English, mathematics and science.
- ensure consistency in the quality of teaching and learning.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time the school has made-

inadequate progress in making improvements.

and

inadequate progress in demonstrating a better capacity for sustained improvement.

At the time of the previous inspection pupils' attainment was improving and progress was judged to be satisfactory across the school. Although there have been some improvements, rates of pupil progress are more variable now than they were in 2008. Attainment at the end of Year 2 has been well below average for many years and in 2009 results fell further. Improvement at Key Stage 2 has been more evident and there were gains in 2009. Attainment in English improved to be close to average whereas attainment in mathematics and science remains well below average. Despite these gains, attainment overall remains low. The school's own data indicates that attainment across the school remains low and progress is inconsistent. Some groups of pupils in some classes are making expected or accelerated progress. However, others are not progressing as fast as they should. This is particularly the case for some boys at Key Stage 1 in writing.

Evidence indicates that the improvements in 2009 were the result of some intensive 'catch-up' programmes, where the whole year group was split into very small groups of around eight pupils taught by additional teachers. This was very teacher intensive and not sustainable in the longer term. It did however illustrate what pupils can achieve with effective teaching. The school has correctly identified the need to improve the progress that pupils make across the whole school and not rely on pupils catching up in their last year. There are some promising strategies in place to support this including the close tracking of pupils' attainment in reading, writing and mathematics. Regular pupil progress reviews are holding teachers to account for the progress of the pupils in their care and are identifying which pupils need extra help. However, much of this work is new and has not secured appropriate progress for all pupils.

The teaching sampled during the inspection was not as strong as at the time of the last inspection. Although there were some striking examples of good teaching much is satisfactory and some is inadequate. The inspection was able to confirm that the leadership's evaluation of teaching is accurate and correctly identifies where teaching is effective and where improvements are needed. Where shortcomings have been identified strategies to support individual teachers have been put in place. This included support with planning and help from LA consultants and from the partner school. Observations confirmed the effectiveness of these measures in

improving teaching. However, the good work that is being done is in danger of being undermined because of the number of ongoing teacher absences. The quality of teaching still varies too much and not enough is consistently good enough to ensure that all pupils are making as much progress as they could.

The school's planning format ensures that teachers give due regard to at least three ability levels within a class group, however not all tasks are finely tailored to match the abilities of all pupils. Although there were some appropriate examples of pupils being challenged in the observed lessons, opportunities are still being missed to extend the learning of the most able. The school has rightly prioritised the development of spoken English as a prerequisite if pupils are to read and write with confidence. While some good opportunities for pupils to engage productively in discussions were observed there remain times when opportunities to develop speaking, listening and comprehension skills are missed. For these reasons the quality of teaching is still too variable.

Despite the efforts made and actions taken to develop provision and strengthen pupils' outcomes, the school is not demonstrating a stronger capacity for improvement than at its last inspection. Positive elements include the strong partnership between the executive headteacher and the head of school, an accurate evaluation of the school's strengths and shortcomings and a determined approach to tackling specific weaknesses identified in teaching. However, some middle leaders are inexperienced and require support to develop their skills and understanding of how to carry out their role effectively. Consequently, too much responsibility falls upon a small number of leaders, particularly the executive headteacher and head of school. Given the lack of a substantive headteacher and the ongoing staff absences, which includes some members of the leadership team, the school is in a more fragile position than that reported in the 2008 inspection report.

The school has received some good support from the LA and from the partner school. Some good work has been done by the IEB in consulting parents and in putting strategies into place to both support and challenge the work of the school. Members of the IEB are committed to improving outcomes and have correctly identified the need to raise the attainment of pupils as a key priority. Although there is a strong partnership between the LA and the IEB there is currently some confusion about the long term strategy to restore governance and support a newly appointed headteacher.

This monitoring visit included a check on the school's safeguarding procedures by scrutinising the single central record and found this to be secure.

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

Amraz Ali
Her Majesty's Inspector

