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19 November 2010

Ms Kyrstie Joslin  
Headteacher  
Birstall Primary School  
Chapel Lane  
Birstall  
Batley  
West Yorkshire  
WF17 9EE

Dear Ms Joslin

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

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 18 November 2010, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during the inspection. Please extend my thanks to the Chair of the Governing Body and staff who made themselves available at short notice.

Since the previous inspection the headteacher has left the school. An acting headteacher led the school until the end of the summer term 2010. During this period the school received considerable support from the local authority. The current headteacher took up her appointment in September 2010.

As a result of the inspection on 13 and 14 May 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 **good progress** in making improvements and **good progress** in demonstrating a better capacity for sustained improvement.

Pupils' attainment had been consistently below average by the end of Year 6 for the past four years until 2010. As pupils start school with well-below average skills this represented satisfactory achievement. However, an analysis of unvalidated data in relation to Year 2 assessments for this year shows that attainment has risen significantly. Results of Key Stage 2 national tests also showed considerable improvement with pupils performing significantly above the national average in English and mathematics. The proportion of pupils attaining the higher Level 5 also



matched national outcomes. While standards in science are not as high as the other two core subjects, pupils' attainment in this subject is now much higher than it has been in the past. The school's monitoring records indicate that all groups of pupils are making better progress than at the time of the previous inspection and are on track to sustain this.

The quality of teaching and learning and, in particular, the use of assessment have improved since the previous inspection. The teaching observed during the inspection was predominately good and this explains why pupils are making better progress. Effective assessment systems are now in place to monitor pupils' progress as they move through the school. This enables teachers to identify underachievement and provide extra support through intervention programmes. This targeted support is proving effective in enhancing progress due to early recognition and good support from teaching assistants, which is a feature of the school. The school has worked hard to develop teachers' assessment skills and this is evident in the appropriateness of the activities that pupils are set in relation to their abilities. School leaders acknowledge that further improvement is required in assessing pupils' progress during lessons and plans are in hand to address this.

Although the headteacher has been at the school for a relatively short period only, the impact she has made on the quality of provision is considerable. School leaders share an educational vision with a rigorous focus on school improvement. The senior leadership team has an accurate understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and has produced a school improvement plan in partnership with staff and governors that addresses all the key areas for improvement. Systems are now in place to monitor the work of the school. Middle leaders are developing the skills necessary to fulfil their role. They have evaluated the areas for which they are responsible and produced action plans designed to secure improvement. They are also becoming increasingly involved in monitoring the quality of provision. Above all, middle leaders now feel empowered and involved in the drive to secure and sustain improvement. School leaders under the direction of the headteacher are establishing a positive climate for learning and a strong sense of teamwork. In essence, everyone is pulling in the same direction and this is beginning to be reflected in improving outcomes.

The governing body has undergone significant change in terms of membership since the previous inspection. Its members have responded well to the support provided by the local authority and they fulfil their statutory duties. The recently appointed chair of governors has high expectations of members and the way business is conducted. Governors visit the school more regularly with a clear purpose associated with its work. The headteacher keeps governors well informed about school developments. Overall, governors are steadily improving their ability to challenge and support the headteacher and, as a result, are gaining a better overview and understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school.

The local authority has provided good support to the school and the governing body and has played an important part in helping to develop the capacity to sustain improvement.

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

Christopher Keeler  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## Annex

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

- Raise standards in English, mathematics and science.
- Ensure that teachers collect accurate assessment information and use it consistently well to plan work that matches pupils' varying ages and abilities.
- Ensure that leaders, managers and governors develop effective skills in using assessment information to review, monitor and evaluate the school's performance.
- Ensure that governors fulfil all of their statutory duties.