

Suite 22 West Lancs
Investment Centre
Maple View
Skelmersdale
WN8 9TG

T 0300 123 1231
Text Phone: 0161 6188524
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk

Direct T 01695 566932
Direct F 01695 729320
Direct email: hcarnall@cftb.com

08 October 2010

Mrs Adele Gaunt
Headteacher
St Hilda's Church of England Primary School
Whittaker Lane
Prestwich
Manchester
M25 1HA

Dear Mrs Gaunt

Notice to improve: monitoring inspection of St Hilda's Church of England Primary School

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 07 October 2010 and for the information which you provided during the inspection. Please also pass on my thanks to the governor who met with me.

I noted that both the class teachers in Key Stage 2 joined the school in September and one of them is also the assistant headteacher. Additionally, the local authority has funded a part-time teacher to support achievement, through the government's 'Every Child Counts' programme.

As a result of the inspection on 09 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 is making satisfactory progress in addressing the issues for improvement and in raising the pupils' achievement.

Test results for last year's leavers show a step up in their attainment, most markedly in mathematics where 23% more pupils reached the standard expected for their age (Level 4 of the National Curriculum) than in the previous year. In this year group the proportion of pupils reaching Level 4 exceeded what was predicted on the basis of their attainment at age seven. This improvement in achievement reflects a focus on intensive catch-up work for these pupils. Throughout the school, there is evidence of improvement in pupils' rate of progress but it is not yet sufficiently consistent across classes and groups of pupils. For example, the school's records show some underachievement last year on the part of boys and pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals. In the lessons observed, there were occasions when the more-able pupils' progress was slower than it should have been.

In the lessons seen, teaching was all at least of a satisfactory quality. This aligns with the school's view and observations by local authority staff. However, the proportion of teaching that is good or better is much smaller than is typical in primary schools. Therefore, a key priority for the school now is to improve class teaching so that most of it is good. The lessons seen were orderly and purposeful and most pupils applied themselves to work well. Relationships were positive. Teachers kept pupils involved by asking them to write answers on individual whiteboards and through well-focused and time-limited discussions in pairs and small groups. However, in full-class sessions, work was not always closely tailored to pupils' varied levels of attainment. Consequently, the pace of learning was too slow for the brighter pupils while some of the less able struggled to understand. The reflective learning journals, introduced this term, are a promising aid to promoting pupils' learning as each week they identify their achievements and set themselves new targets.

The curriculum has improved with more work that links different subjects; dedicated sessions devoted to basic skills; a wider range of extra-curricular clubs; and more educational visits and visitors, particularly in the arts and English.

The leadership team has been strengthened by the appointment of an assistant headteacher. Senior staff, the local authority and governors keep a close eye on the school's development and on pupils' rates of progress. For instance, regular meetings are held between senior staff and individual teachers to discuss assessments of pupils' attainment and progress. However, systems are quite new and need time to become embedded. Work remains to be done, for example, to ensure that information from assessments consistently influences the work set for pupils in lessons. The governing body has supported the headteacher in a robust approach to holidays in term time and, as a result of implementing the new policy, the attendance rate this September is better than last.

Following the previous inspection the local authority produced a statement of the action it would take to support improvement in the school. This fulfilled requirements. The local authority has worked closely with the school and provided a range of effective support for it. This support has contributed to the improvements seen in pupils' achievement, the quality of teaching and evaluation of the school's work and pupils' progress.

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

Pat Kime **Her Majesty's Inspector**

Annex

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

- In order to raise attainment and accelerate pupils' progress, improve the quality of teaching by:
 - ensuring that throughout all lessons pupils are engaged in activities they find interesting and stimulating
 - giving pupils sufficient time to think for themselves and complete fully the tasks they have been set
 - making full use of assessment to ensure that work set provides pupils of all abilities with the correct amount of challenge.

- Increase pupils' enjoyment of learning and improve their basic skills by:
 - improving the quality of the curriculum
 - providing better opportunities for pupils to use literacy and numeracy in other subjects.

- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
 - refining procedures for evaluating the school's work so that they provide the fine detail needed to accelerate the pace of improvement
 - developing tracking systems which provide a clear picture of how well different groups of pupils are achieving.

- Work with parents and carers to improve attendance and punctuality.