

Suite 22
West Lancashire Investment Centre
Maple View
White Moss Business Park
Skelmersdale
WN8 9TG

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

Direct T 01695 566934
Direct F 01695 729320
Direct email: gtunncliffe@cfbt.com



21 October 2010

Mrs Val Pilkington-Smith
Headteacher
Larkholme Primary School
Windermere Avenue
Fleetwood
Lancashire
FY7 8QB

Dear Mrs Pilkington-Smith

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Larkholme Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 19 and 20 October 2010, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings.

The inspection was the second monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in December 2009. The full list of the areas for improvement which were identified during that inspection is set out in the annex to this letter. The monitoring inspection report is attached and the main judgements are set out below.

Progress since being subject to special measures – **satisfactory**.

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – **satisfactory**.

This letter and monitoring inspection report will be posted on the Ofsted website. I am copying this letter and the monitoring inspection report to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Lancashire.

Yours sincerely

Ruth James
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in December 2009

- Raise standards, improve achievement and accelerate pupils' progress throughout the school by improving the quality of teaching and learning and the curriculum and by effectively monitoring and evaluating the impact of the school's work.
- Improve the quality of teaching so that learning is good by:
 - matching work more effectively to pupils' needs
 - improving teachers' understanding of and the use of assessment to identify precisely pupils' next steps in learning
 - eradicating inadequate teaching.
- Ensure that the curriculum meets the needs of all pupils in developing their literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology skills.
- Improve provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage and the transition into Year 1 by providing a stimulating learning environment and teaching programme so that all children achieve well in their learning and development.
- Ensure that all those who lead and manage the school evaluate and monitor pupils' progress, putting in place effective targets and procedures to enable all pupils to achieve as well as they can.

Special measures: monitoring of Larkholme Primary School

Report from the second monitoring inspection on 19 and 20 October 2010

Evidence

The inspector observed seven lessons and the same number of teachers, observed aspects of the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher and other school staff, a group of pupils, the Chair of the Governing Body and a representative from the local authority.

Context

Since the previous monitoring visit in April 2010 the assistant headteacher has resigned. A part-time associate deputy headteacher was appointed from September 2010 until the October half-term break. One full-time class teacher left in July 2010 and another changed to part time working from September 2010. A permanent full time Early Years Foundation Stage teacher was appointed from September 2010. Another class teacher has been appointed from September for the autumn term.

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning

The results of the national curriculum tests in 2010 show that attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 was below average. These results show that these pupils made inadequate progress during Key Stage 2, having achieved slightly above-average attainment at the end of Key Stage 1. Progress in writing was very weak with fewer than half the pupils making the expected progress since Key Stage 1. Of those who had achieved the higher Level 3 in writing at Key Stage 1 just over one third went on to gain the higher Level 5 at Key Stage 2. Boys' attainment was particularly low. Only half the boys gained the expected Level 4 or better in mathematics and fewer than half gained the expected level in English.

At Key Stage 1 attainment improved in 2010. Teacher assessment data show that the biggest improvement was in reading but pupils also did better in writing and mathematics than in 2009. The proportions of pupils achieving at least the expected levels in reading, writing and mathematics were above average while the proportions achieving the higher Level 3 were around average.

Achievement during the Reception Year in 2010 was much better than in 2009. Moderated teacher assessments show that children did better, for example, in linking letters and sounds, and number and writing skills. Boys did not do as well as girls but their results were a considerable improvement on 2009.

Overall, it is clear that the school is beginning to have some success with raising the achievement of younger pupils but much work remains to be done to enable older pupils to catch up and make similar gains.

Teachers' skills in assessing pupils' levels of attainment are improving but are not yet consistently accurate. The volume of work produced by pupils is improving. Books are, in the main, well presented and pupils are encouraged to take a pride in their work. Handwriting is improving and more pupil work is on display. Pupils have individual literacy and numeracy targets in their books and they can use these to explain the areas they have achieved and those they are working on.

Progress since the last monitoring inspection on the areas for improvement:

- Raise standards, improve achievement and accelerate pupils' progress throughout the school by improving the quality of teaching and learning and the curriculum and by effectively monitoring and evaluating the impact of the school's work – **satisfactory**.

Other relevant pupil outcomes

A large majority of pupils continue to behave very well. They generally show positive attitudes and are helpful around school. Attitudes to learning are good and pupils are keen to do well. Sports activities are particularly enjoyed and these contribute well to pupils leading healthy lifestyles. Older pupils enjoy taking on more responsibilities, such as supporting younger pupils at lunch time. Attendance has improved and persistent absence reduced as a result of the school's work.

The effectiveness of provision

Some progress is being made in improving the quality of teaching and learning but inadequate teaching has not yet been eradicated and there is too much teaching that is only just satisfactory. The proportion of good teaching in Key Stage 2 remains too low to enable the pupils to make the good progress needed to catch up, given the legacy of underachievement.

Much training and development work has gone into improving the quality of teaching, but teachers sometimes apply strategies mechanistically without sufficient consideration of the needs of their individual pupils. Planning is not adapted quickly enough in response to what pupils are actually doing. Examples seen included a whole-class plenary session that assumed an understanding of a technique which some pupils had not grasped, and pupils who completed their set tasks quickly and were not given further work. Some weaknesses noted at the previous monitoring visit were observed again, for example, pupils spending too much time copying a heading from the board and overlong teacher-led sessions with minimal pupil involvement. Teachers' skills in differentiating activities to meet the needs of pupils of different abilities are very variable. Examples of identical, or very similar, activities

for children at very different stages of development were seen. Differentiation of pupils' learning is often largely by outcome and low expectations; undemanding tasks and the relatively slow pace in many lessons result in pupils not reaching their potential. Many pupils said work is often easy for them. On occasion pupils sit quietly, behaving well, but doing little work and this goes unnoticed by the teacher.

Formal management-led processes for monitoring pupils' progress are now better embedded and teachers are expected to follow up underachievement with planned interventions. The success of these interventions is not yet being systematically evaluated, but there are plans to do so in future. However, teachers are not always astute enough in monitoring pupils' small steps of progress on a day-to-day basis and responding quickly, for example, by providing extra help or more challenging work.

A new marking policy has been developed and implemented. Scrutiny of books shows that teachers are now including constructive suggestions about how pupils may improve their work as well as praise; pupils report that these are useful.

A new creative curriculum has been introduced which links work from different subject areas around themes. Pupils have responded positively to this and it is improving their interest in their work. It has also helped in identifying opportunities for writing across the curriculum.

The Early Years Foundation Stage outdoor area has been enlarged but has a limited range of activities, partly due to the constraints of space. Planning now shows how these activities link with areas of learning. The school has well-advanced plans for further development of a new outdoor area with improved equipment and resources. The indoor Early Years Foundation Stage area has been much improved and now provides a stimulating learning environment. Attractive displays make good use of pupils' work, such as self portraits. Collaborative planning between the two teachers and teaching assistants ensures that there are carefully planned and structured opportunities for learning and more focused adult-led work. Assessment has been strengthened and expectations raised.

Progress since the last monitoring inspection on the areas for improvement:

- Improve the quality of teaching so that learning is good by:
 - matching work more effectively to pupils' needs
 - improving teachers' understanding of and the use of assessment to identify precisely pupils' next steps in learning
 - eradicating inadequate teaching – **satisfactory**.

- Ensure that the curriculum meets the needs of all pupils in developing their literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology skills – **satisfactory**.
- Improve provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage and the transition into Year 1 by providing a stimulating learning environment and teaching programme so that all children achieve well in their learning and development – **good**.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The headteacher has a clear vision of where the school needs to be. She has a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and the determination to tackle the weaknesses. A number of systems and processes have been introduced. However, leadership and management of teaching and learning are not yet having enough impact on improving the quality of teaching, especially in Key Stage 2. The associate deputy headteacher has provided valuable and effective support to the headteacher in areas such as monitoring and evaluation. At middle leadership level, skills continue to develop. The work of the numeracy coordinator is beginning to have an impact. The absence of the literacy coordinator earlier in the year delayed her training, but she has begun to take a more active role in monitoring planning. The literacy development plan includes some relevant actions but these are not yet having enough impact on standards in English. The school remains dependent on the support of the local authority, particularly in the absence of a permanent deputy or assistant headteacher. The contributions made by subject leaders are variable. Since the last visit the school environment has improved, with some refurbishment and decoration. New information and communication technology equipment has been purchased but it is not yet fully functional. The management of the Early Years Foundation Stage has improved as a result of support from the local authority, as is evident in the improved quality of provision and outcomes. Governors have received more training and are now better positioned to challenge and support the school.

Progress since the last monitoring inspection on the areas for improvement:

- Ensure that all those who lead and manage the school evaluate and monitor pupils' progress, putting in place effective targets and procedures to enable all pupils to achieve as well as they can – **satisfactory**.

External support

The local authority continues to provide very good support to the school. In addition to adviser time, consultants have delivered a variety of training and development sessions and supported individual teachers with particular aspects of their development. Management support and training at senior and middle leadership

level have helped to strengthen monitoring and evaluation skills. The local authority was instrumental in finding an associate deputy headteacher at short notice for this term. Human resources advice has also been offered.