

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

T 0300 123 1231

Text Phone: 0161 6188524 **Direct T** 01695 566934

enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk **Direct F** 01695 729320

[www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

**Direct email:** [gtunncliffe@cfbt.com](mailto:gtunncliffe@cfbt.com)

05 November 2010

Miss M Thacker  
Headteacher  
Walverden Primary School  
Bracewell Street  
Nelson  
Lancashire  
BB9 0TL

Dear Miss Thacker

### **Notice to improve: monitoring inspection of Walverden Primary School**

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 4 November 2010 and for the information which you provided during my visit. Please pass on my thanks to the governors who gave up their time to talk with me and to the many pupils I met during the day. Their inputs were valuable to the inspection.

Since the time of the previous inspection, building work has been completed and there have been staffing changes. Three staff have left and several new staff have been appointed, including newly qualified teachers and some on temporary contracts. A temporary teacher has been appointed to give additional support to Year 6 with literacy and numeracy. The acting deputy headteacher and two acting assistant headteachers remain in post until January 2011, when a permanent deputy headteacher will take up post.

As a result of the inspection on 4 November 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 inadequate progress in addressing the issues for improvement and in raising the pupils' achievement.

The school did not participate in the national assessment tests in summer 2010. However, the school's own data about the attainment and progress of pupils show that pupils' achievement remains inadequate overall because attainment is low and the progress they make is inconsistent. For a minority of pupils, progress is good. This is especially so for higher-attaining pupils where the proportion of them who attained the higher National Curriculum Level 5 has risen. However, for some groups

of pupils, progress is inadequate in some aspects. For example, a minority of last year's Year 6 pupils did not make the expected progress in mathematics. Similarly, a minority of the current Year 5 pupils did not make expected progress in writing. Pupils' achievement is inadequate in Key Stage 1 and continues on a declining trend. The school has yet to consistently address discrepancies in progress between groups of pupils.

The school has introduced a detailed system for tracking pupils' attainment and progress and senior leaders place more emphasis on progress when they observe lessons. Teachers assess pupils' attainment each half-term and this enables any underachievement to be identified and appropriate interventions made. However, the systems used to record progress are less secure so that not all staff and the governing body have an accurate picture of how well pupils are achieving. With appropriate support from the local authority, staff are gaining confidence in assessing pupils' progress. Teachers now consistently use agreed systems to assess improvements in pupils' writing and are currently developing their expertise in using similar systems to assess improvements in pupils' numeracy and reading skills. The assessment, literacy and numeracy coordinators are clear about their roles. They have received effective support from local authority consultants and play a strong part in working alongside staff to plan activities designed to help pupils take the next steps in their learning. They understand the need to focus more on how well pupils are succeeding when monitoring learning and the impact of their improvement plans.

Relationships between staff and pupils are very positive. Classroom routines are very well established. Teachers manage their classrooms and support staff well. Behaviour is good and teachers use praise aptly to encourage pupils. Teachers use assessment information well to group pupils and match work more closely to the needs of different groups. Pupils recognise that staff are using a wider variety of teaching and learning strategies, including the use of interactive whiteboards and laptop computers to help them enjoy their learning, gain independence and increase their opportunities to discuss what they know, understand and can do. In the nursery, children have more structure and guidance for their learning activities and a new canopy is enhancing outdoor provision. Nevertheless, as at the time of the last inspection, in the majority of lessons observed, pupils made satisfactory rather than good progress. Progress was limited when pupils spent too long on the carpet listening to the teacher; questions were not well targeted at particular pupils nor were they sufficiently probing; opportunities were lost to develop pupils' speaking skills and the complexity of the tasks meant that pupils were unclear about what they had to do and what they were learning.

The use of learning targets for pupils is developing through the support of the local authority. It is stronger in literacy than in numeracy. Some classes still use whole-class targets; others use group targets. In the best practice, pupils have individual targets that help them to understand what they need to do to improve. Pupils find

the new marking scheme helpful in identifying their existing strengths and the next steps needed, although it is not yet consistently used by all staff.

The school is successfully improving attendance and reducing the number of pupils who are persistent absentees. The work of the headteacher, attendance officer, family support worker and the agreements about best practice with other schools are helping to ensure fewer pupils miss learning that is vital to improving progress. Communications with parents and carers about the importance of education have been strengthened. Pupils' understanding has also been developed through the use of rewards and sanctions.

The local authority's statement of action about supporting the school meets requirements. Officers' interventions are being appropriately refined in response to evaluations of the school's progress with different priorities in the action plan.

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

Sonya Williamson  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Annex**

### **The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in November 2010**

- Raise standards and achievement in English and mathematics and ensure more consistently good progress by:
  - ensuring that the quality of teaching is consistently good or better
  - giving pupils feedback on how they might improve further
  - using targets for individual pupils in mathematics
  - encouraging pupils to participate more actively in lessons, particularly by providing more opportunities for them to speak
  - providing more structure and guidance for activities where children learn through independent play in the Nursery and Reception
  - strengthening the focus on pupils' progress when managers observe lessons.
  
- Improve pupils' attendance by:
  - communicating to parents and carers the importance of good attendance
  - intensifying efforts with the parents and carers whose children are persistently absent.