

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

T 0300 1231231
Text Phone: 0161 6188524
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk

Direct T 01695 566 937
Direct F 01695 729320
Direct email:
jsimmons@cfbt.com



19 October 2011

Mrs M Gibbons
Headteacher
Pontefract St Giles Church of England Voluntary Aided Junior and Infant School
Skinner Lane
Pontefract
West Yorkshire
WF8 1HG

Dear Mrs Gibbons

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Pontefract St Giles Church of England Voluntary Aided Junior and Infant School

Following my visit to your school on 18 and 19 October 2011, 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 third monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in July 2010. 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 – good

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – good

Newly Qualified Teachers may be appointed.

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 Wakefield.

Yours sincerely

Sara Morrissey
Her Majesty's Inspector

September 2011



Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place on July 2010

- Take immediate action to ensure that a strong, stable leadership and management team is in place in order to promote a secure capacity to improve.
- Improve pupils' progress and raise attainment, particularly in English, mathematics and science by:
 - establishing and implementing robust procedures to monitor, evaluate and improve the quality of teaching
 - making learning consistently relevant, exciting and challenging for pupils of all abilities
 - creating more opportunities for independent learning.
- Improve attendance by:
 - regularly and rigorously analysing patterns of attendance of different groups of pupils
 - building the partnerships with parents and carers and continuing to work with the local authority's education welfare service to reduce term-time holidays and persistent absence.

Special measures: monitoring of Pontefract St Giles Church of England Voluntary Aided Junior and Infant School

Report from the third monitoring inspection from 18 and 19 October 2011

Evidence

Her Majesty's Inspector observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and samples of pupils' work. Meetings were held with the headteacher and other nominated staff, groups of pupils, the Chair, and other representatives, of the Interim Executive Board (IEB) and the School Improvement Adviser.

Context

Since the last monitoring inspection, there has been a small number of staffing changes, including the appointment of a substantive deputy headteacher who was previously fulfilling the role on a temporary basis. An assistant headteacher has left the school. A business manager has also been appointed who is shared with three other schools in the Pontefract Trust. On the first day of the monitoring visit, parents and carers attended the whole-school 'Harvest Festival' assembly. Parents and carers were also participating in a 'floury fingers' event during the week, working alongside their children in cookery classes across Key Stages 1 and 2.

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

Provisional results of tests taken in summer 2011 by Year 6 pupils indicate that the gap widened between the school's performance and the national average. Attainment in English, particularly in writing, and mathematics remains low and a similar picture is reflected in pupils' attainment in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 2. These results reflect the legacy of past underachievement that resulted from inadequate teaching and the poor attendance of a significant number of pupils. The vibrant learning environment that has been established throughout the school is making a strong contribution to reversing this trend of decline and attainment is beginning to rise. This improvement is being reinforced by the regular attendance of the great majority of pupils, which is providing greater continuity in their learning and resulting in more rapid progress.

In lessons, pupils' progress is accelerating because of improvements in the quality of teaching and a curriculum that is increasingly relevant. Pupils enjoy their learning; they talk eagerly about their work and the steps they are taking to improve its quality. Pupils generally understand their personal learning targets and value the increased opportunities to work in groups or as part of a team, as well as time to work independently. Where the pace of progress remains inconsistent, it is because tasks are not tailored to extend the learning of all pupils. Occasionally, opportunities are missed to stretch the most able or to provide additional guidance to ensure that small groups of pupils are able to work together effectively and achieve goals within the time allocated for a particular activity.

Senior leaders have a very secure grasp of the progress being made by individual pupils because of regular assessments that track progress accurately and rigorously. Class teachers are increasingly skilful at identifying where additional support is required. Strategies such as the Breakfast Club reading group and 'rainbow writing' are proving effective in closing gaps in prior learning. However, it is too soon to measure the impact of these initiatives on pupils' overall achievement in the longer term.

A reappraisal of the assessment of children's progress through the Early Years Foundation Stage, by leaders, has identified that some assessments have, in the past, been slightly too generous. Leaders have undertaken detailed assessments that have been externally moderated to secure an accurate baseline from which to measure progress following entry to Key Stage 1. The most recent assessments indicate that children entering the Nursery class have a broad range of different skills, based on their previous experiences. Children's attainment, on leaving the Reception class in summer 2011, was broadly similar to that seen nationally. However, their skills in communication, language and literacy were slightly less well developed.

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

- Improve pupils' progress and raise attainment, particularly in English, mathematics and science – good

Other relevant pupil outcomes

Attendance has continued to rise since the last monitoring inspection because pupils are more enthusiastic about school and enjoy the increased variety of learning opportunities. Rigorous systems are in place to monitor attendance, which are underpinned by the school's high expectations of all pupils. A significant reduction in term-time holidays has resulted from regular communications with parents and carers that highlight the detrimental impact of absence from school on learning. Consequently, pupils' rate of attendance since September 2011 is high at 97% and provides a challenging baseline from which to build in the longer term.

Pupils' behaviour and attitudes in lessons and around school have continued to improve in response to improvements in teaching and the quality of the curriculum. Pupils speak very positively about the impact of the school's behaviour policy and its associated rewards. However, a small proportion of pupils are still developing the necessary skills and behaviours to support their learning effectively. The school's Christian values have also been strengthened significantly and help to promote a caring ethos throughout the community. During the harvest festival assembly, pupils showed great respect to each other and pride in their school when making presentations to their parents and carers.

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

- Improve attendance – good

The effectiveness of provision

Inadequate teaching has been eradicated since the last monitoring inspection and more is of good quality. This is because staff have adopted a team approach to improving practice, informed by an accurate assessment of pupils' current progress. Learning objectives are matched routinely to assessment criteria and cross-curricular links are becoming established between different subjects. For example, the 'floury fingers' event created links in learning between science, literacy and numeracy as well as engaging pupils, parents and carers in a lively and highly successful activity. The quality of marking has been strengthened further and pupils report that they act upon the helpful advice provided to improve their work.

Where teaching is most successful, pupils are challenged to develop their own strategies, for instance, to solve mathematical problems. Teachers model writing techniques effectively, for example, to help younger pupils to develop their skills in structuring sentences correctly and a good range of resources enables older pupils to develop their skills in persuasive writing or to create a sequence of good instructions. Questioning is also an emerging strength across the school as teachers probe and test pupils' understanding of new ideas and concepts. Teaching loses some of its impact on learning where opportunities are missed to engage all pupils during whole-class activities. Occasionally, teachers do not provide the necessary direction to ensure that pupils working in small groups or pairs use their time effectively. At times, the most able pupils are not challenged sufficiently, for example, through activities that deepen their understanding and extend their knowledge.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The headteacher provides highly effective leadership and has overcome significant barriers to progress since her appointment in April 2011. She has established high expectations and communicated a very clear vision for school improvement which is shared by all staff. Strategies to counter past underachievement are becoming more effective because they are clearly understood and applied by staff consistently across the school. Consequently, significant gaps in prior learning are closing and attainment is starting to rise from low levels. The deputy headteacher has continued to provide effective challenge and support in the use of assessment and improving the quality of teaching. Subject coordinators, particularly in English and mathematics, are developing the skills to monitor and evaluate pupils' performance in their subject. Plans are in hand to increase their contribution to reviewing the quality of teaching across the school.

The IEB has maintained a very clear overview of the school's strengths and weaknesses and provides good levels of both challenge and support. For example, a recent review by a member of the IEB, of the impact of the school's Christian ethos on pupils, has identified emerging strengths and some helpful areas for further development. Arrangements are underway to reconstitute the governing body and ensure that newly elected governors receive high quality induction and training to enable them to fulfil their roles effectively.

Progress since the last monitoring inspection on areas for improvement:

- Take immediate action to ensure that a strong, stable leadership and management team is in place in order to promote a secure capacity to improve – good

External support

Good support from the local authority has contributed to the more rapid progress made by the school since the last monitoring inspection. The advanced skills teacher has continued to provide much valued assistance in improving the quality of teaching and local authority officers have provided good support to resolve remaining staffing issues. The School Improvement Adviser has worked alongside leaders to moderate assessments and evaluate the quality of teaching which has contributed to securing a robust and accurate picture of the school's strengths and remaining areas for development. However, support from the local authority is being withdrawn in stages as the school demonstrates greater capacity to drive improvement.

Partnership working with three other schools in the Pontefract Trust is increasing opportunities to share good practice. Since her appointment in September, the business manager has been able to strengthen financial management procedures and is actively seeking ways to increase the school's cost-effectiveness. Links established with the neighbouring secondary school have also been valued in supporting personalised behaviour management strategies.