

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

T 0300 123 1231
Text Phone: 0161 618 8524
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk

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



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Mrs P Barnes
Headteacher
Devonshire Road Primary School
Devonshire Road
Bolton
Lancashire
BL1 4ND

Dear Mrs Barnes

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools: monitoring inspection of Devonshire Road Primary School

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 15 February 2012 and for the information which you provided during the inspection. Also, thank you to the pupils and members of the governing body who spoke with me.

Since the last inspection, a new headteacher has been appointed. There have been significant staff changes including to several senior leader posts. A new senior leader structure is in place with redefined roles and responsibilities. Also, approximately half of the classes in the school have seen a change of teacher. Other changes have been made to administrative posts.

As a result of the inspection on 8 and 9 December 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 has made good progress in making improvements.

Achievement of pupils at the school

Pupils' achievement is significantly improving. The attainment of pupils is rising and pupils are making increasingly better progress. The results of national tests for pupils in Year 6 in 2011 show improved levels of attainment in English and mathematics. These results also show improved percentages of pupils making the expected rate of progress in English and mathematics, though the percentage for mathematics was below that expected nationally. Overall, improvement is also evident in the outcomes of teacher assessments for pupils in Year 2 in 2011. Inspection evidence from observations in lessons, scrutiny of pupils' work and analysis of school data, shows that these improvements are being sustained. In the vast majority of lessons seen, pupils made good and improving progress. Of particular note, given the lower rate of progress in mathematics in 2011, is the much improved progress being made in this subject this year. Disabled pupils and those with special educational

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needs, pupils who do not speak English as their first language and other pupil groups largely make the same progress as all pupils.

The quality of teaching

The consistency of good and better teaching is improving. During the inspection, most teaching was good. Evidence from the monitoring carried out by senior leaders and the local authority shows improving percentages of good lessons. Pupils say that lessons in English and mathematics in particular have improved during the last year. They say that lessons are fun and are much more 'hands on'. Pupils are much more aware of their targets and talk confidently about how they learn from each other due to the regular opportunities they have for discussion. However, they also think that there are too many lessons in English and mathematics. Inspection evidence shows that the timetable for the curriculum is suitably broad and balanced. As a result of the inspection, senior leaders and governors have agreed to explore pupils' concerns further.

Lessons observed during the inspection were characterised by well organised classrooms and good planning. Improved use of assessment information is ensuring that tasks are well matched to pupils' needs. Also, teachers are making better use of assessment techniques during lessons to check on pupils' understanding before moving learning on. There is some variation between classes such as in the pace of learning and the level of expectations. Effective leadership is reducing these inconsistencies and ensuring improvement.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

The school continues to meet the requirements for safeguarding pupils, including maintaining a single central register detailing the required checks made on the suitability of staff. Checks include those made to the Criminal Records Bureau. Pupils say that they feel safe because the staff are vigilant in their care and supervision. Relationships between pupils and staff are courteous and respectful. Pupils behave well in lessons and their good attitudes to learning make a significant contribution to their improving progress. Pupils say that behaviour is improving. Behaviour was judged as good at the last inspection. However, pupils say there is a small amount of misbehaviour which is not always dealt with quickly by the school. Attendance is improving and the percentage of persistent absence is reducing.

The quality of leadership and management of the school

The headteacher is bringing about significant improvement to the school's performance. She has a clear vision for school improvement and is very well supported by senior staff and governors. In particular, the headteacher and the recently appointed deputy headteacher, have introduced an improved rigour to the monitoring and evaluation of the school's provision and outcomes. A strong senior team is being developed. Performance management is much improved. Middle leaders' roles and responsibilities have been reviewed and staff say they are now very clear about what is expected of them. As a result, the monitoring role of middle leaders is much improved and is beginning to make a notable

impact on the quality of teaching and the rate of pupils' progress. The data tracking system and the use of this is much sharper and is improving the ability of leaders to quickly identify any underachievement and to target support and intervention. The governing body is increasingly well informed through more effective reporting from middle and senior leaders and through the initiation of on-site monitoring by governors.

School leaders have made improved efforts to communicate effectively with parents and carers and to involve them more in the life of the school. Parent forums have been held regularly including informing parents and carers about Ofsted matters, new report formats, the school's values and vision and about the Children's University. A parents' champion has been a regular visitor to school and has held 'drop-ins' for parents and carers. Questionnaires have been sent to consult parents and carers about their views. A newly reformed parents, carers and teachers group is busy arranging fundraising and social events. The school recognises that more needs to be done to ensure even better engagement with parents and carers, but a good start has been made.

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

John Coleman
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Raise attainment by:
 - improving the consistency of teaching and learning so that it is good or better throughout the school
 - ensuring that assessments of pupils' learning provide a secure basis for identifying their needs and for planning lessons
 - providing opportunities for pupils to apply their basic skills across the curriculum.
- Strengthen leadership and management by:
 - developing the skills of middle leaders in monitoring and evaluating provision in order to accelerate pupils' progress
 - making fuller use of the systems for tracking pupils' progress better to identify their learning needs and raise their attainment.
- Strengthen communication and partnerships with parents and carers by:
 - ensuring they are kept fully informed about their child's progress and how best they can support this
 - taking their views into account when making decisions about school life.