

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 December 2012

Ms Sue Tomlinson
Headteacher
Willow Wood Community Primary School
Bradbury Road
Wharton
Winsford
Cheshire
CW7 3HN

Dear Ms Tomlinson

Notice to improve: monitoring inspection of Willow Wood Community Primary School

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 18 December 2012, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during the inspection. Discussions with senior leaders and managers, representatives of the governing body, the pupils and an officer from the local authority were also very helpful. Please pass on my thanks to all concerned for the time they gave to talk to me and for the welcome I received.

Since the May 2012 inspection, the senior leadership team has been restructured and a deputy headteacher has been appointed from within the school. A new Year 6 teacher took up post in September.

As a result of the inspection on 15–16 May 2012, 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 pupils' achievement.

Pupils say they enjoy their learning and this is reflected in their improving attendance rates. In lessons most pupils work hard and try to do their best. Although Year 2 and Year 6 pupils made strong progress last year, their attainment at the end of 2012 was well below average. School data show this picture is beginning to improve. Almost all pupils are making better progress than they did this

time last year. Nonetheless, standards are low in almost every class and overall pupils in the current Year 6 are unlikely to reach the minimum standards for primary pupils. This is because underachievement is deep rooted. Consequently, large proportions of pupils are not working at the levels expected for their age. Some groups, especially pupils known to be eligible for free school meals, make slower progress than their peers. The achievement of disabled pupils and pupils with special educational needs has improved markedly. Almost all are making expected or better progress from their starting points in reading and mathematics. Their progress in writing is less secure. However, some of these pupils make slower progress in lessons because they are too reliant on adult support.

A whole-school focus on tackling gaps in pupils' skills is beginning to bear fruit. Pupils' handwriting skills are improving and they are using simple punctuation more regularly in their writing. Weaknesses in spelling remain and too many pupils lack the stamina to write at length. In mathematics, pupils are beginning to grasp key number skills but they have too few opportunities to solve problems. Pupils' achievement in reading is stronger because the teaching of phonics (the sounds that letters make) is better organised and older pupils have regular opportunities to read and discuss books. Pupils are beginning to use their basic skills in other subjects.

Effective whole-school training and quality feedback on teachers' performance are leading to improvements in teaching. The best teaching is characterised by high expectations and careful modelling of new learning so pupils know what they need to do to succeed. Teachers have a much clearer understanding of pupils' starting points but they do not always use this information well enough to match activities to pupils' needs. This means some pupils find their work too easy or too difficult. Not enough attention is given to checking pupils' understanding during lessons and not all teachers tackle pupils' misconceptions. All teachers mark pupils' work thoroughly and offer helpful guidance on how to improve. Although pupils respond to these comments they do not always use the advice to make their work better.

The headteacher is relentless in her drive to eradicate weaknesses. Decisive action and a common sense of urgency mean much has been done to establish a firm foundation to aid the school's recovery. Significant change is being managed sensitively so morale is high and there is an emerging 'can do' attitude among staff and pupils. Senior and middle leaders are making a positive contribution to the school's improvement because they are crystal clear about their responsibilities. Improved systems to manage teachers' performance and frequent discussions about pupils' progress mean expectations have been raised and teachers are being held to account for their work. Teaching is observed frequently, but the checks on pupils' books do not happen often enough.

Great strides have been made in improving provision for disabled pupils and pupils with special educational needs. Leadership has been strengthened so there is greater scope for supporting staff and pupils. A review of pupils' needs means the school has a clearer understanding of the pupils who have learning difficulties. An

audit of staff skills is leading to tailored training, while a purposeful system for tracking pupils' achievement means individual plans to support pupils are better matched to their specific needs. Members of the governing body are eager to improve their effectiveness as critical partners. They are beginning to check the work of the school by visiting lessons and meeting each month to discuss the school's progress. They recognise an external review of the governing body would help them to hold school leaders to account more robustly.

The local authority's statement of action has been evaluated and it fulfils requirements. The local authority is providing good quality support for almost every aspect of the school's improvement. Local authority officers have provided whole-school training and supported senior leaders in checking on progress through a thorough review of teaching and learning. The local authority is also providing financial assistance to help the school update resources and to employ an additional teacher in Year 6.

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

Joanne Olsson
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in May 2012

- Improve pupils' achievement in Years 1 to 6 by accelerating progress for all groups of pupils to raise attainment in English and mathematics by:
 - ensuring gaps in pupils' knowledge and application of numeracy skills are addressed
 - ensuring gaps in pupils' writing skills regarding the correct use of punctuation, sentence structure and accurate spelling are addressed
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to use their basic skills well in subjects across the curriculum.

- Ensure the quality of teaching is consistently good or better by:
 - increasing the pace of learning in some lessons so that pupils make at least good progress
 - ensuring expectations are high and work is well matched to pupils' needs
 - ensuring effective use is made of marking and that pupils take full notice of the points made.

- Improve the provision made for pupils with special educational needs in mainstream classes so they make at least satisfactory progress by:
 - ensuring that pupils' additional needs are identified and addressed as soon as possible
 - ensuring that all members of staff who work with these pupils are given appropriate training.