

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 566855
Direct F 01695 729320
Direct email: gail.hill@cfbt.com

17 January 2013

Maria Cross
St Chad's CofE Primary School
Gladstone Street
Winsford
Cheshire
CW7 4AT

Dear Ms Cross

Requires improvement monitoring inspection visit under section 8 of the Education act 2005 to St Chad's CofE Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 17 January 2013, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report on the findings of my visit. Thank you for the help you gave me and for the time you made available to discuss the actions you are taking to improve the school since the most recent section 5 inspection.

The visit was the first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in November 2012. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with senior leaders, six members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority. The school improvement plan was evaluated. The school's monitoring records and minutes from governing body meetings were also considered. The inspector was taken on a tour of the school to meet staff and pupils.

Context

There have been no significant changes to staff or the school's organisation since the inspection.

Main findings

Senior leaders and governors unanimously agree the inspection judgements are fair and accurate. They know there is much to do to become a good school but their

determination to tackle shortcomings is reflected in the school's development plan which identifies appropriate priorities for improvement. Nonetheless, this plan is not robust enough to ensure the school makes rapid progress. This is because the planned actions, especially those that relate to teaching, lack precision and there is not enough detail about how the school will measure success. The headteacher is shouldering too much of the responsibility for delivering the actions because the roles of other leaders are not clearly defined.

Improving teaching is at the heart of the school's improvement agenda and work has already taken place to refresh teachers' skills. Greater opportunities for teachers to work together and to observe good practice are beginning to reinvigorate teaching. Improvements to the systems for managing teachers' performance means there is a much sharper link to national teaching standards. Teaching is frequently observed and senior leaders are tackling weaknesses with greater vigour. This is beginning to bear fruit, for example, classroom environments are becoming more fit-for-purpose. However, too little attention has been given to developing a whole-school understanding of the features of good teaching to help teachers identify the steps they need to take to make their practice the best it can be.

The governing body are keen to develop their role as critical partners and have identified appropriate actions to improve their effectiveness. They recognise they would benefit from an external review of the governing body to ensure they are well equipped to offer informed support and challenge to school leaders.

Senior leaders and governors have begun to take effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection. Following the visit to the school, HMI recommends that further action is taken to:

- review the school development plan to ensure all actions, particularly those that relate to teaching, are precise and have clear criteria to measure success
- review the roles of all leaders so the responsibility for driving improvement is not overly reliant on one or two key members of staff
- develop a shared understanding of the features of good teaching so staff are crystal clear about the steps they need to take to improve
- use the support of the local authority to commission an external review of the governing body to help governors develop their role as critical partners.

Ofsted will continue to monitor the school until its next section 5 inspection.

External support

External support is being used effectively to tackle shortcomings. Guidance from local authority consultants is helping leaders to bring about improvements in the Early Years Foundation Stage. The School Improvement Adviser visits the school frequently to review progress and identify appropriate support to meet the school's needs. Representatives from the Diocese have complemented the headteacher's drive to improve the learning environment through a useful review of displays in classrooms and around the school.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Cheshire West and Chester and the Director of Chester Diocese.

Yours sincerely

Joanne Olsson
Her Majesty's Inspector