

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

**Direct T** 01695 566933  
**Direct F** 01695 729320  
**Direct email:**  
ggleaden@cfbt.com



22 January 2013

Mrs Joyce Willetts  
Headteacher  
Freehold Community Junior Infant and Nursery School  
Sidmouth Street  
Oldham  
Greater Manchester  
OL9 7RG

Dear Mrs Willetts

### **Requires improvement monitoring inspection visit under section 8 of the Education act 2005 to Freehold Community Junior Infant and Nursery School**

Following my visit to your school on 21 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 the headteacher, other senior leaders, and members of the governing body including the Chair and a parent governor. Additionally, a meeting was held with a group of pupils in Year 5 and 6. A telephone discussion was conducted with the local authority's senior school improvement officer. The school's self-evaluation and action plan were evaluated. The school's monitoring records showing the outcomes of lesson observations and tracking of pupils' progress were scrutinised. Minutes of the governing body were evaluated.

#### **Context**

Since the previous inspection, one full time teacher has left the school and the role has been filled by an existing member of staff. The roles of teaching assistants have been reviewed. The school's self-evaluation and action plan have been reviewed and rewritten. The local authority school's advisor left her post. A new advisor has just been appointed to support the school.

## **Main findings**

The governing body and staff were not expecting the outcome of the previous inspection to be 'requires improvement' since they held a more positive view of the school's performance. Senior leaders have worked hard to support staff morale.

The headteacher and senior leaders reacted promptly to the issues raised by the previous inspection. They have reviewed the school's self-evaluation and produced an action plan which focuses upon the points for improvement arising from the previous inspection. This is timely and the involvement of the governing body and staff is commendable.

The self-evaluation is too generous. It presents a view of the school which is inaccurate as a starting point for improvement by stating that pupils' achievement, the quality of teaching and leadership and management are good. This is not the case, as clearly shown in the outcomes of the previous inspection.

The school's action plan is too broad and fails to specify the precise ways in which the school will rapidly improve. For example, there are no step by step plans to regularly measure the improvements made in each area. Additionally, there is no clear expectation of when the school expects to demonstrate that it will meet the criteria for being judged as a good school. Critically, there is a lack of joined-up thinking regarding the correlation between each of the areas, such as the direct impact of leaders' actions on improving the quality of teaching and thereby improving the rate of pupils' progress.

The governing body does not have sufficient skills and expertise to look at and interpret the school's data. This goes some way to explaining their surprise at the previous inspection outcomes. Discussions with the governing body and the minutes of their meetings show that, overall, there is a lack of focus on raising standards. As yet, the governing body do not work as a unified group to pursue improvements to the school's efforts to raise standards.

Senior leaders and governors are not taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the last section 5 inspection and plans are not sharply focused on rapidly bringing about improvement. The school should take immediate action to:

- Urgently review the school's self-evaluation and action plan to sharpen the targets for expected improvement to pupils' achievement, the quality of teaching and leadership and management. These should include measurable ways of accounting for this improvement set at regular intervals in the next five school terms.
- Provide training for the governing body regarding data analysis and for evaluating progress in respect of the school's action plan priorities.
- Ensure that the school's self-evaluation is accurate, realistic and based on sound evidence about the school's performance.
- Increase the whole school and governing body focus on raising standards.
- Review the curriculum timetable to ensure that sufficient emphasis is made for improving pupils' skills in reading, writing and mathematics.

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

## **External support**

Support from the local authority is made available through its improvement service. The school was judged by the local authority, prior to the previous inspection, to require no additional support. This lacked sufficient challenge to the school's leadership and performance and contributed to senior leaders and the governing body sharing an over inflated view of the school's performance. Since the inspection, there has been an absence of support from the local authority, in part, due to staff absence. In consequence, the school commissioned an independent educational consultant to help with the school's self-evaluation. The outcome of this is unsatisfactory.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Oldham and as below.

Yours sincerely

John Coleman

**Her Majesty's Inspector**

- Appropriate authority - Chair of the Governing Body/Interim Executive Board
- Local authority
- the academy chain where relevant
- Diocese - for voluntary aided and voluntary controlled schools
- The Education Funding Agency (EFA) if the school has a sixth form
- The person or body responsible for appointing foundation governors if the school has a foundation
- The lead inspector.