

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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Ms Jenny Haunch
Headteacher
Washacre Primary School
Clough Avenue
Westhoughton
Bolton
Lancashire
BL5 2NJ

Dear Ms Haunch

Serious weaknesses first monitoring inspection of Washacre Primary 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 confirm the outcome and inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave during the inspection and for the time you made available to discuss the actions which have been taken since the school's most recent section 5 inspection.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to have serious weaknesses in November 2012. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

During this inspection, meetings were held with the headteacher, the local authority's principal school improvement professional, the local authority link professional to the school, both members of the Interim Executive Board (IEB), and the deputy headteacher. The local authority's statement of action and the school's improvement plan were evaluated. Two other members of the IEB, the local authority primary adviser and the local authority senior human resources officer, joined the above personnel for the final feedback.

Context

Since the last inspection, two temporary members of staff have left the school. The newly appointed permanent deputy headteacher has taken up his post in the school.

The quality of leadership and management at the school

The headteacher and members of the IEB have made a positive start to improving the performance of the school. The focus has been on improving the quality of teaching. The headteacher has adapted the improvement plan to respond to the recommendations from the recent inspection. This is supported by operational plans which specify action to be taken and those expected to carry out the action understand what they need to do. However, there is scope for the school to tweak the school improvement plan to link planned action to pupils' learning outcomes more clearly.

The headteacher has met with each individual teacher to set targets based on improving the attainment and accelerating the progress of pupils in each individual class. As a result, teachers are held more accountable for the performance of their pupils. Reviewed policies on teaching and learning, marking and feedback, and the use of assessment have been introduced to support teachers and teaching assistants to develop a consistent approach to these aspects of practice. Action to check the quality of teaching is starting to identify strengths and areas for development in teaching skills. As a result, three members of staff are developing leadership skills to enable them to lead on aspects within the school. The newly arrived deputy headteacher joins the headteacher and business manager to form a leadership team with complementary skills. Furthermore, the headteacher has strengthened the process for identification of pupils identified with special educational needs so that work can be matched better to their ability.

Members of the IEB continue to support and challenge the headteacher. Local authority officers provide the majority of the membership of the IEB and bring a wealth of experience, expertise and knowledge in order to support and challenge senior leaders. Just prior to the inspection, the local authority invested a considerable amount of revenue to support the school. An experienced headteacher was appointed and, since the inspection, the contracts of several temporary teachers have been extended to provide some stability in staffing until the end of the academic year. The primary adviser meets the headteacher weekly and the link professional meets the headteacher fortnightly to hold senior leaders to account for their decisions and to provide support and guidance. In this way the IEB is kept well informed of the process of improvement.

Following the monitoring inspection the following judgements were made:

The school's improvement plan is fit for purpose.

The local authority's statement of action is fit for purpose.

The plan covers the period from November 2012 to July 2013. This was a decision taken to enable the local authority to review the impact of the actions taken and base the remainder of the plan, and an exit strategy, around a more stable staffing profile.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Interim Executive Board and the Director of Children's Services for Bolton local authority.

This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Eileen Mulgrew
Her Majesty's Inspector