

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 566863
Direct F 01695 729320
Direct email:
jbennett@cfbt.com



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Mrs Jane Grecic
Executive Headteacher
Cherry Tree Primary School
Highfield Road
Farnworth
Bolton
Lancashire
BL4 0NS

Dear Mrs Grecic

Requires improvement monitoring inspection visit under section 8 of the Education act 2005 to Cherry Tree Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 15 March 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 January 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with the executive headteacher, the acting head of school and a representative of the governing body. A telephone discussion took place with a representative of the local authority. Short visits were made to most classes. The school improvement plan was evaluated. Various monitoring reports and records of pupils' progress were considered.

Context

There have been no changes to staffing, governance or to the number of pupils on the school roll since the recent section 5 inspection.

Main findings

The school improvement plan has been revised and includes appropriate activities with realistic timescales, responsible personnel and suitably ambitious success criteria. The plan is regularly reviewed and shared with staff. It clearly indicates the direction and pace of the school's work.

Leaders are working hard to develop consistency of expectations across all classes in terms of pupils' achievement. The school's assessment of pupils' progress is rigorous and accurate, taking account of their performance in a range of classwork and tests. The good practice of some teachers in assessing pupils' work is being shared with other schools through moderation activities.

Leaders are providing individual support to teachers in order to ensure that teaching is consistently at least good. Leaders observe teachers' work regularly and systematically, and provide good quality developmental feedback, along with coaching or training as appropriate.

A raising achievement group has been established, including governors, senior leaders and a local authority representative. This group monitors the school's work in addressing its key improvement priorities and ensures that there is no slippage in completing planned actions.

The curriculum has been reviewed and expectations about the teaching of foundation subjects have been raised, so that the same rigour is evident in teachers' planning of topic work as in their planning of literacy and numeracy lessons. Classroom displays of pupils' work indicate that they are producing better quality writing in a range of subjects. Their writing in science has been enlivened by the experience of hatching chicks in school.

Leaders, including those responsible for literacy and numeracy, are supporting teachers in planning suitable activities to meet the needs of students of varying attainment levels. Pupil groupings have been adjusted to allow more-able pupils to consolidate their skills in order to attain the higher levels. In mathematics, challenge activities have been developed that stretch pupils' thinking and enable them to use and apply their skills in real-life contexts.

The school is reviewing its provision for information communication technology (ICT) and has produced costed plans to refresh equipment. In the meantime, staff are working hard to provide opportunities for pupils to use ICT in different subjects.

Leaders monitor pupils' books systematically and provide feedback to teachers on the quality and helpfulness of marking. Governors have also reviewed pupils' work books as part of their monitoring of standards.

The school continues to work hard with families to emphasise the importance of good attendance. Letters are sent home to inform parents of the attendance rates of their children, and the impact of poor attendance on learning. These efforts are having a positive impact and pupils' attendance is now in line with the national average.

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

- evaluate the impact of curriculum changes on the development of pupils' writing
- enable pupils to evaluate the school's progress against its priorities and report their thoughts to the governing body

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

External support

The local authority keeps the school's work under review and provides appropriate support through the designated lead professional who moderates leaders' work, for instance by undertaking lesson observations with them to assure the quality of their judgements and feedback. The school's leaders and teachers have access to a range of professional development opportunities, including through attendance at local support networks. The school has recently contributed to an exciting project, co-ordinated by the local authority, to enhance pupils' enjoyment of, and response to, rich literary texts.

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

Yours sincerely

Shirley Gornall

Her Majesty's Inspector