

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



17 April 2013

Mrs C Williams
Headteacher
St Gabriel's Catholic Primary School
Kensington Drive
Higher Folds
Leigh
Lancashire
WN7 2YG

Dear Mrs Williams

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

Following my visit to your school on 16 April 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 February 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you, the deputy headteacher, the Chair of the Governing Body and a representative from the local authority. The school improvement and action plans were evaluated.

Context

In the absence of the teacher, the nursery children are being taught by a newly qualified teacher. Two support assistants, who work in the nursery, are also absent. The acting deputy headteacher was appointed to the substantive post from 9 April. There are on-going discussions between the diocese, local authority and school regarding the proposed change to being a 'one site' school and necessary building work.

Main findings

You have continued the work started in the autumn term to establish new ways of working, to raise expectations and strengthen the quality of provision. The inspection in February confirmed the areas for development you had already identified. You have acted on the findings in the report to reprioritise and sharpen your improvement plan. The calendar of action rightly shows a strong initial emphasis on developing the quality of teaching with clear, challenging short and longer term targets. There is scope to refine and differentiate the targets to foster a higher proportion of outstanding teaching and to delineate the expectations for each key stage.

The strong emphasis on embedding ways of working is starting to pay off in increasing consistency, such as in the collection of data about pupils' progress. You have made clear your expectations of teachers regarding pupils' expected progress and how this links with reviews of teachers' performance. There is a growing acceptance among staff, especially from those with identified responsibilities, of being held to account and the need to show initiative, as in tracking and analysing the progress of pupils.

Staff are willing to reflect on their practice. Professional development through training, coaching and peer support is having a positive impact. Staff are using their visits to outstanding schools to identify elements of effective practice to use in their own classrooms. For example, during the visit, two teachers were using tablet computers to display pupils' work on the classroom screen and support the class in appraising and assessing the quality of the writing.

You have sought and acted on advice, especially regarding provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage where there is an accepted need to strengthen early reading and writing. Initial steps have been taken, including new furniture, resources and activities outdoors, to engage children in literacy.

You, the deputy headteacher and Chair of the Governing Body recognise the urgency of the school's situation. Governors have a clear overview of the disparities in rates of pupils' progress and in the quality of teaching. Well-reasoned decisions are being made concerning staffing and leadership responsibilities. Although the action plan identifies where governors will be involved in monitoring activities, there is scope to strengthen the involvement of some or all governors in regularly and robustly checking how well action is having the expected impact. Given impending changes in the governing body, it is an apposite time to revisit roles, responsibilities and ways in which governors can play a full part in the drive for the school to be at least good.

As well as leading improvement within the school, you have had by necessity to give consideration and time to planning for the proposed 'one site' school and restructuring of staffing. The Chair is aware of the need to consider how best governors may support and manage these changes to minimise the demands on you especially in the summer months leading up to the proposed changes.

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 recommends that further action is taken to:

- differentiate targets related to good and outstanding teaching and consider targets for teaching in the different key stages
- explore with staff what accounts for the school-wide strength in the teaching and learning of mathematics so as to a) identify elements of transferable effective practice and b) heighten subject leaders' understanding of the expectations of their role
- identify how the governing body can play a robust and critical role in ensuring that implementing the action plan remains central in the face of impending changes in location and staffing.

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

External support

The local authority has been involved in compiling the action plan and in arranging a link with two headteachers of local outstanding schools to give support in leadership and management. This has also led to the setting up of triads, groups of three teachers who will observe and discuss each others' practice. The guidance of an advanced skills teacher is already been followed in the nursery in widening provision and raising expectations. The local authority also endorses the school's decision to use an external consultant to assist in implementing the action plan.

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

Yours sincerely

Sonja Øyen

Her Majesty's Inspector

The letter should be copied to the following:

- 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.