

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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Mr Michael Cowieson
Headteacher
Old Hall Drive Primary School
Old Hall Drive
Gorton
Manchester
M18 7FU

Dear Mr Cowieson

Requires improvement monitoring inspection visit under section 8 of the Education act 2005 to Old Hall Drive Primary School, Manchester

Following my visit to your school on 17 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 I had separate meetings with you and the deputy headteacher, the Chair of Governors and the teacher in charge of Years 3 and 4. I also had a meeting with a representative of the local authority. You took me on a tour of the school and I was able to see some of the learning activities the pupils were involved in at the start of the day. I analysed the school's development plan and I scrutinized the minutes of governing body meetings that have been held since the inspection. I also examined the work in a sample of pupils' books so that I could assess the quality of marking.

Context

Three teachers have joined the school since the inspection and a number of further appointments are planned. Currently, the governors are in the process of appointing a temporary school improvement officer. The successful candidate for this post will work with subject coordinators to help them develop their skills as leaders and managers. The governors are also seeking to appoint a consultant to work with you and your senior colleagues to assist with implementing your plans to improve the school. You have also reviewed the way that existing staff are deployed in the school. The new staff structure, which is to be implemented in September 2013, aims to ensure that staff are more accountable for the standards that pupils achieve.

Main findings

Senior leaders, governors and the local authority accept the findings of the recent inspection and agree that the areas for improvement are the right ones for the school. Senior leaders have responded quickly and taken action to strengthen lesson planning. Teachers routinely plan lessons together; this allows them to share their ideas and expertise. When planning their lessons teachers consider ways in which they can meet their pupils' individual needs in order to keep them on track and interested throughout the lesson. The quality of teaching and learning is now regularly monitored by senior leaders. This is making teachers more accountable for the quality of their work and for the achievement of their pupils. The school's records indicate that since the inspection the quality of teaching is improving.

Senior leaders have reviewed the marking policy and evidence in pupils' books shows that the quality of marking is improving. The best marking informs pupils about what they have done well and what they need to do to make their work even better. However, the policy is not used consistently well by all teachers and the marking in some books is not helpful with some pupils not being given enough information to help them learn from their mistakes.

Since the inspection you and your colleagues have reviewed the school development plan. Although the plan is detailed it lacks precision. For example it is not clear how the priorities for development relate to the areas for improvement in the inspection report. In addition some of the success criteria are not specific enough. A number of them relate to the successful completion of a particular activity rather than describing the impact of that activity on outcomes for pupils. Consequently, it is not clear which are the most important priorities or how governors will be able to accurately measure the progress the school is making towards achieving them.

Governors have tightened the management of the extra finance the school receives through the pupil premium. They have approved a policy which identifies how this money is to be spent and how they will monitor the impact of this funding on the outcomes for pupils. As result they will be able to hold senior leaders robustly to account for its use.

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, I would recommend that further action is taken to:

- sharpen the school development plan so that it is clear what the order of priorities are and how they are linked to the areas for improvement in the inspection report
- make sure that the development plan includes milestones and success criteria so that governors are able to measure the impact of the actions taken to improve the school
- make sure that the marking policy is used consistently well by all teachers.

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

External support

The Senior School Effectiveness Officer (SSEO) from the local authority is working in partnership with the headteacher to help coordinate useful support for the staff. This is helping to improve the quality of teaching and strengthen leadership. The SSEO has also started to hold termly meetings to monitor the progress the school is making against each of its development targets; checking that the actions being taken are effective in bringing about improvement.

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

Yours sincerely

Charles Lowry

Her Majesty's Inspector