

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



24 April 2013

Mrs Catherine Mallard
Headteacher
St Begh's Catholic Junior School
Coach Road
Whitehaven
Cumbria
CA28 7TE

Dear Mrs Mallard

Requires improvement monitoring inspection visit under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 to St Begh's Catholic Junior School, Cumbria

Following my visit to your school on 23 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 on 26-27 February 2013.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with the acting headteacher, acting deputy headteacher and four members of the Governing Body including the chair. I had a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority. I visited all classrooms, met all staff and spoke with pupils. The school's action plans were evaluated.

Context

Since the last inspection, the headteacher has left the school. The deputy headteacher is acting as headteacher and a member of the senior leadership team is acting as deputy. These arrangements are in place until a substantive headteacher is appointed.

Main findings

School leaders have continued to build on the improvements that were recognized at the last inspection. They have developed a 'Post-Ofsted Action Plan' that is well organised and addresses all the areas that require improvement methodically. However it does not currently show when actions are expected to be completed or specifically how the impact on teaching and pupils' achievement will be measured.

The previous headteacher introduced a number of new systems and procedures, which provide sound foundations for further improvement. The system to track pupils' progress is now securely in place and is being used more effectively by leaders and teachers. Pupils who are not making good progress are identified and provided with additional support where appropriate. Teachers are sharing their planning with teaching assistants so that support is better matched to specific needs.

The development of marking and feedback has been the main focus since the last inspection. Teachers are giving very clear feedback to pupils, helping them to recognise errors, improve their work and move on to the next steps. Pupils are given time to follow-up the teacher's guidance and know they can seek support if they 'get stuck'. They say they find the new approach 'really helpful', particularly when they are given an additional challenge to work on. Teachers have introduced learning targets that are suitably matched to pupils' different levels of ability. The targets are used most successfully in Year 5 where they are displayed and used to guide group work.

The improvements to marking and target setting are supporting pupils to make more rapid progress as they move through the school. However there is still a dip in pupils' achievement in Year 3 when they transfer from the infant school. This is because teachers do not have a sufficiently detailed analysis of pupils' prior attainment to enable them to plan for rapid progress from the start.

Actions to improve other aspects of teaching are being led by the acting deputy headteacher and are currently being trialled in Year 5. The introduction of more investigative work and a dedicated area for mathematics is popular with pupils. However this good practice is not currently being shared across the school. The leadership skills of middle leaders are being developed but actions are at early stages. There are plans to review job descriptions and involve middle leaders more fully in checking on teaching and pupils' progress.

Governors have a clear overview of strengths and weaknesses in the school. They have developed a good quality action plan to improve their effectiveness in challenging and supporting school leaders and monitoring performance. Teachers and school leaders share this strong commitment and all are determined to drive through improvements as quickly as they can.

Senior leaders and governors have begun to take action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection. Following the visit to the school, I recommend that further action is taken to:

- refine the action plan so that it shows when actions are expected to be completed and has clear criteria by which success can be measured
- develop liaison with staff at the infant school so that teachers can plan for continuity in teaching and build on pupils' prior attainment more effectively
- ensure that successful initiatives started in Year 5 are shared and developed across the school.

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

External support

The school has been well supported by the local authority over the last three years. Advisers have provided training on teaching and learning, assessment and progress tracking and have given advice on action planning. There are plans to support the acting headteacher to develop skills in monitoring teaching. The adviser has recently brokered support with two local schools to enable teachers to share effective practice and develop the skills of subject leaders. The acting headteacher is also taking advantage of the Diocese Catholic Leadership Programme.

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

Yours sincerely

Jean Olsson-Law
Her Majesty's Inspector