

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 566862
Direct F 01695 729320
Direct email:
rcowley@cfbt.com



8 May 2013

Mrs Patricia Monk
Headteacher
North Park Primary School
Bessemer Green
Spennymoor
County Durham
DL16 6PP

Dear Mrs Monk

Requires improvement monitoring inspection visit under section 8 of the Education act 2005 to North Park Primary School, Durham

Following my visit to your school on 7 May 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 March 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

During the visit I held meetings with the headteacher, middle leaders, representatives of the governing body including the Chair and a representative of the local authority's education development service. I reviewed a range of documents including the school's improvement plans, governing body minutes and records of recent lesson observations.

Context

There have been no significant changes to the school's organisation since the inspection.

Main findings

The key issues identified for improvement at the time of the inspection were in the school's improvement plans and were being acted upon with the support of local authority advisers. The headteacher, governing body and local authority officers have redoubled their efforts to improve the Early Years Foundation Stage, the quality of teaching and extending the role and impact of middle managers since the inspection. Plans were quickly adapted and implemented to take account of the inspection findings, with appropriate actions and precise targets to hasten the improvements needed.

A range of work to improve teaching is taking place including short-term focused support plans and training for teachers whose teaching is not good enough. The good practice in teaching, evident in school at the time of the inspection, has been shared with staff. However opportunities for teachers and teaching assistants to see outstanding practice in other schools are not yet in place. Middle managers are now fully involved in monitoring teaching, reviewing pupils' work and teachers' planning. With the headteacher they review teachers' assessment information on pupils' progress in lessons to make sure pupils who are falling behind get additional help in lessons or in groups to help them catch up. Managers speak positively of their wider roles and the increased accountabilities and responsibilities they have been given since the inspection. The teaching of phonics (the letters that sounds represent) to younger pupils was identified as a weakness during the inspection. Leaders immediately changed the way phonics is taught in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1.

Governors have recognised the need to be more vigilant in checking how well the school is improving. They have increased the number of meetings and range of work they undertake. This includes the use of curriculum walks with the headteacher to check that actions to tackle the school's weaknesses are being delivered by staff. A small group of governors have received training from a local authority adviser in the analysis and use of data, including Ofsted's school dashboard. All governors are to receive similar training in the near future.

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:

- Extend opportunities for teachers and teaching assistants to see and learn from outstanding practice in relation to teaching and assessment in highly effective schools.

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

External support

Local authority advisers have worked quickly with the headteacher, governors and staff in amending the action plans by providing advice and by challenging the headteacher and governing body about the way they monitor the impact of actions being taken. Specific training for governors, in the analysis of performance data, is sharpening their skills in asking questions of the head teacher and staff. Officers are working with Early Years Foundation Stage teachers to improve provision in the unit and the way that phonics is being taught. An additional school improvement officer is working with middle managers to further develop their roles in driving the required improvements.

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

Yours sincerely

Margaret Farrow

Her Majesty's Inspector