

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



10 May 2013

Mrs Georgina Harland
Headteacher
Bewcastle School
Bewcastle
Carlisle
Cumbria
CA6 6PF

Dear Mrs Harland

Requires improvement monitoring inspection visit under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 to Bewcastle School, Cumbria

Following my visit to your school on 9 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 February 2013.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with the headteacher, the two teachers, representatives of the governing body and a group of pupils. The inspector had a telephone conversation with the local authority general adviser who is leading the review of governance. Governing Body records and the school action plans were evaluated. The inspector looked at pupil progress tracking and visited all classrooms.

Context

A new headteacher was appointed prior to the last inspection and took up her post on the 15 April 2013.

Main findings

The short-term action plan addresses the areas that were found to require improvement at the last inspection. The plan lists appropriate actions but does not indicate how progress will be checked or how the impact of actions will be measured. The new headteacher's development plan shows aspiration for the school, with clear aims and priorities for further improvement. Leaders and governors now need to integrate the plans and specify the role that all staff and governors will have in leading actions, checking progress and evaluating how well actions are raising pupils' achievement.

School leaders and teachers are taking suitable action to support improvement and are drawing on external support well.

The first area for improvement focuses on accelerating pupils' progress, particularly in mathematics, by setting work at the right level for pupils of all abilities and improving marking. Teaching was judged to be good at the last inspection and initiatives which had just been started are having a positive impact. For example, grouping pupils by ability for mathematics is helping higher ability younger pupils to make more rapid progress while working alongside older pupils. Teachers are using different approaches to teach mathematics following support from an expert teacher from Lancaster University. Pupils say they enjoy these lessons and find work interesting. Appropriate steps are being taken to improve marking. Teachers have consulted pupils on what they find most helpful with a view to implementing a new marking policy from the start of the next academic year.

The second area for improvement focuses on strengthening leaders' and governors' roles in checking teachers' performance and pupils' progress. The headteacher has made appropriate revisions to the performance management procedures to include specific targets for pupils' progress.

Teachers use individual assessment booklets, which provide a useful record of each pupil's progress through English and mathematics national curriculum levels and inform lesson planning. However, they do not show whether pupils are doing as well as pupils in other schools with similar starting points. The headteacher has plans to introduce termly tracking which will be kept on a central database. This is a necessary development to support all staff and governors in evaluating how well pupils are achieving over time.

The Governing Body has arranged a full review of governance led by a local authority adviser and supported by a National Leader of Education. Governors show strong commitment and have taken swift action to identify the support they need. They have already agreed new roles and responsibilities to support a more focused approach to monitoring pupils' progress and managing teachers' performance. The newly appointed clerk to governors is producing good quality records of meetings, which detail agreed actions and next steps. The records indicate that Governors are now asking more probing questions.

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, HMI recommend that further action is taken to:

- Ensure that the next improvement plan:
 - indicates when actions will start and finish and who is responsible for driving them forward,
 - has measurable success criteria and
 - indicates how leaders and governors will check that actions are taking place as planned and that they are having the intended impact

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

The HMI will telephone the headteacher during the Autumn Term to arrange a second visit.

External support

School leaders are drawing on a range of support from the local authority, a National Leader of Education and an expert teacher from Lancaster University. The local authority general adviser is providing good advice and leading a review of governance.

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