

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



24 June 2013

Mr Kevin Burns
Headteacher
Toner Avenue School
Johnston Avenue
Hebburn
Tyne and Wear
NE31 2LJ

Dear Mr Burns

Special measures monitoring inspection of Toner Avenue School

Following my visit with Adrian Guy Her Majesty's Inspector to your school on 20 and 21 June 2013, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave during the inspection and for the time you made available to discuss the actions which have been taken since the school's previous monitoring inspection.

The inspection was the second monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in November 2012. The full list of the areas for improvement which were identified during that inspection is set out in the annex to this letter. The monitoring inspection report is attached.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time the school is making reasonable progress towards the removal of special measures.

Newly qualified teachers may not be appointed.

This letter and monitoring inspection report will be published on the Ofsted website. I am copying this letter and the monitoring inspection report to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Interim Executive Board and the Corporate Director Children Adults and Families for South Tyneside.

Yours sincerely

David Brown

Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in November 2012

- Raise standards and accelerate pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics by eradicating inadequate teaching and significantly increasing the proportion of good or better teaching by April 2013 by:
 - developing teachers' use of information about what pupils have learnt in reading, writing and mathematics so that the work they give pupils to do is not too hard and not too easy
 - providing pupils with interesting lessons which capture their motivation and willingness to learn
 - ensuring opportunities are identified across all curriculum areas for pupils to apply and develop their writing and mathematical skills systematically
 - making sure that pupils consistently receive good quality guidance on what they need to do to improve their work and that they are given time to make the improvements needed.
- Improve the quality of leadership and management by:
 - completing the planned appointment of a deputy headteacher as soon as possible
 - improving and developing the skills of teachers who lead and manage subjects
 - ensuring the quality of teaching is rigorously checked, robustly analysed and assessed against the progress pupils make and their standards of attainment
 - ensuring performance management is effectively used to improve the quality of teaching
 - developing the curriculum in all key stages, so it better meets the needs and interests of pupils and builds up their skills systematically
 - improving the resources for learning across the school but particularly in the Early Years Foundation Stage to enable teachers to provide creative and exciting lessons in both the indoor and outdoor learning areas.
- Improve the effectiveness of the governing body by:
 - ensuring the systems used by the governing body to keep a close check on the school's finances are sufficiently robust
 - ensuring that there is a leadership structure in place that can deal with the problems the school faces
 - developing the skills of governors so that they can challenge the leaders about the quality of teaching and pupils' standards and progress by April 2013.

Report on the second monitoring inspection on 20 and 21 June 2013

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work and teaching in every class in the school, including two lessons observed jointly with the headteacher. They scrutinised documents including pupil progress information, pupils' work, senior leaders' evaluations of the school's work, the school improvement plan, minutes of meetings of the interim executive board (IEB) and information from a local authority review. Inspectors met with a group of pupils, the headteacher and deputy headteacher, lead teachers for numeracy and literacy, the Chair, vice-chair and two other members of the IEB and representatives of the local authority.

Context

Since the last monitoring inspection visit on 12 February 2013, two teachers have left the school and a new deputy headteacher and lead teachers for literacy and numeracy took up post at the beginning of the summer term. A new lead teacher for the Early Years Foundation Stage and a new Reception teacher have been appointed from September 2013. The school is in the process of becoming a sponsored academy.

Achievement of pupils at the school

The school's data show that most pupils are now making better progress in reading, writing and mathematics, although this is not consistent in all classes and there are groups where progress is not quite as rapid, including more-able pupils. Moderation of teachers' assessments of pupils' work is becoming established and this is helping teachers to make more accurate judgements about pupils' capabilities than previously. Work in pupils' books shows that, over time, most are making more progress than in previous years. However, partly because of a legacy of poor teaching leading to underachievement, progress for some year groups is lower than nationally expected rates of progress. The provision of an additional class in Year 6 has led to significant improvements in progress for this group of pupils and the local authority has agreed to continue this intervention work for a further year. The school realises that this is not sustainable and that teaching must continue to improve to overcome this legacy of underachievement. However, teacher assessment of current Year 6 pupils indicates that attainment in English and mathematics is predicted to be higher in 2013 with more pupils achieving standards beyond those expected for their age.

Pupils know their current levels and targets for reading, writing and mathematics and most can talk about how to improve their work. They enjoy reading and they are encouraged to practise their reading skills at home as well as in school. Older pupils have a very good understanding of the importance of reading to give them a good start in life.

The quality of teaching

Senior leaders and staff from the partner school are making determined efforts to improve the quality of teaching throughout the school. There is evidence that standards are rising and that inadequate teaching has been eradicated. Expectations of what pupils are capable of are higher and in the best lessons pupils are making much more progress as the level of challenge increases and a faster pace to learning develops.

Children settle quickly when they enter the Nursery class and show that they can sustain concentration on an activity and cooperate well with others in their play. They are developing their knowledge of letters and the sounds they make (phonics) but the current practice of teaching phonics to large groups means that children's individual needs are not met as effectively as they could be.

Leaders in the Early Years Foundation Stage recognise they need to focus on developing children's skills in writing. However, current strategies place too great an emphasis on adult direction and there is a lack of opportunity to build on children's enthusiasm and to develop their willingness to write independently for a purpose. Learning outside is not yet well developed. Too often, activities are not planned to develop and inspire children's learning or to build on the learning of key skills and language in the classroom. Adults spend too much time directing or helping with simple tasks. Consequently, opportunities are missed to assess what children are learning and to develop and extend their understanding through skilled questioning or engaging children in exploring ideas further.

Assessment information is being used more effectively by teachers to inform their planning. In the English and mathematics lessons seen and in pupils' work, teachers incorporate tasks which are pitched at different levels to match pupils' abilities. Teachers are now using questioning more effectively to check pupils' understanding. Marking shows an improvement across the school. Where pupils' books are marked well helpful feedback is provided, making clear to pupils what they need to do to improve further. However, too much marking focuses on what pupils have done or need to correct rather than on this improvement.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils are polite and welcoming to visitors and are happy to discuss the recent improvements they have seen in their school. They feel safe and report that bullying, once a regular occurrence, is now very rare. One group of pupils reported that 'the school is calmer now and the teachers care about us all'. Observations of lessons confirm that there is very little inappropriate behaviour. Pupils have more positive attitudes to learning and the majority are confident to tackle tasks and respond well to instructions. Parent members of the IEB report that pupils are now keener to come to school. The arrangements for checking the suitability of adults working with children meet requirements. Attendance is around the national average but has declined slightly since the last inspection.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

The headteacher and new deputy headteacher have developed a strong partnership to drive improvements in a firm but supportive manner. As a result, there is a developing sense of collective commitment among staff to improving the school. Senior leaders and the IEB have worked with the local authority to develop rigorous monitoring and evaluating processes. Together they recognise the developing strengths of the school and the areas which need to be prioritised in order to raise achievement for all groups of pupils. The new leaders of numeracy and literacy are becoming more involved in improving provision but need to develop their skills in monitoring its quality and impact.

Procedures for checking on pupils' progress are strengthening. Pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics is measured each half term and this information is evaluated by senior leaders. As teachers' skills in assessing progress grow, the system is becoming more secure. As a result, teachers know which pupils are on track and can give extra help to those pupils who are falling behind.

Senior leaders regularly check on the quality of teaching and pupils' work and provide teachers with valuable feedback that identifies exactly where practice can improve. The developing partnership with a local academy allows staff to observe and meet with other teachers and to reflect on their practice.

The IEB, newly established at the previous inspection, is now fully operational and members have a high level of relevant expertise, are clear about priorities and are determined that the school should rapidly improve. The board has supported changes to the senior and middle leadership of the school, is providing significant challenge to school leaders and teachers and is actively requesting and seeking the information it needs to convince itself that the school is improving at a fast enough rate.

The school is in the early stages of becoming a sponsored academy. Senior leaders and members of the IEB are clear that the work involved in this should not distract from the task of improving teaching and raising standards as quickly as possible.

External support

The local authority has provided effective support for school leaders to improve teaching throughout the school. The school is confident that a substantial investment in additional teaching for Year 6 pupils will improve pupil progress for this year group significantly this year. An effective partnership has been brokered with the New Seaham Academy, which is helping to improve teaching, and staff welcome the structured visits which enable them to reflect upon and improve their own practice in the classroom.

As the school develops its own capacity the local authority is reducing the amount of support provided but remains committed to providing further support as needed.