

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



5 July 2013

Mr Shipton-Smith
Valley Primary School and Nursery
Whinlatter Road
Whitehaven
Cumbria
CA28 8DA

Dear Mr Shipton-Smith

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Valley Primary School and Nursery

Following my visit to your school on 5 July 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 April 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

During the visit, I met with you, other senior leaders, pupils, the chair of the governing body and two representatives of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. I evaluated the school action plan. You and I visited each classroom to meet pupils and staff who were keen to show me recent improvements to the school environment and explain how external advisers had made a positive impact on the school and the outcomes for the pupils: for example the healthy 'runny nose' station. I also looked at the training records, evaluations and the impact that recent training has had on improving the quality of teaching.

Context

Since the section 5 inspection, which judged the school to require improvement you have continued in your role as acting headteacher and the staffing has remained stable.

Main findings

You, the governors and staff have responded well to the judgement of the previous inspection and are determined to continue to work together to improve the performance of the school to good. The school improvement plan focuses clearly on tackling the areas for improvement identified in the recent inspection. However, the plan needs to be modified to state how the impact of the actions will be evaluated to ensure progress is maintained.

You are determined to strengthen the quality of teaching and are focused on: what makes a good or outstanding lesson; improving written work through moderation and work scrutiny; and setting clear learning objectives and success criteria in lessons. Staff appreciate the professional development they have received and are determined to improve the quality of teaching. The training has enabled staff to pinpoint where they will make changes to their teaching in the future: for example through a revised marking policy to ensure pupils' know how they can improve their own work. Performance management systems are now firmly in place. The staff I spoke to were enthusiastic about the direction the school is taking and the changes that are being implemented.

New resources for improving reading and writing have been purchased and middle and high ability pupils are being more suitably challenged and motivated. Additional small group interventions have been introduced. Staff are more aware of the importance of tracking the progress of all pupils to ensure they are challenged to reach their potential. A new target setting and tracking system is planned for September. Pupils, who I met, commented that they enjoy their lessons and were able to give examples of their targets. They also said that behaviour has improved since the last inspection.

The literacy coordinator showed me evidence that guided writing groups have had an impact on the progress pupils make in Key stage 2. Opportunities to use literacy across different subjects have improved: for example pupils studying the Romans visited a Roman settlement exhibition and created an imaginary machine that could make sandals – they then independently video-recorded their creative ideas.

The governors did on-line training and completed an evaluation of the effectiveness of the governing body as a team and produced a development plan. As a result, the governing body has become more challenging with the senior leaders. They are now able to hold them to account through better analysis of planning and linking specific governors to literacy and mathematics. The governing body and the school staff have improved safeguarding procedures through increased training and the establishment of a safeguarding committee.

Senior leaders and governors are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection. The school should take further action to:

- review the action plan so there is greater detail about the time frame for action and how the impact of the actions will be monitored and evaluated
- further strengthen the opportunities for governors to monitor the performance of senior leaders
- enable the headteacher and a governor to attend an Ofsted 'Getting to good' seminar.

Ofsted will continue to monitor and support the school until its next section 5 inspection. I will come back and visit the school in the autumn term.

External support

The support provided by the local authority to develop leadership and management and teaching and learning has been beneficial. The authority has brokered a local leader in education at a nearby school to provide opportunities for mutual support between the staff. The local authority has also worked with your governing body and helped them complete their effectiveness evaluation. You have also been proactive in accessing wider external support for developing the science and oral skills of the pupils, as well as termly visits and reports that are completed on the nursery and reception classes.

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

Yours sincerely

Christina McIntosh

Her Majesty's Inspector

The letter should be copied to the following:

- Appropriate authority - Chair of the Governing Body
- Local authority
- The lead inspector