

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](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

**Direct T** 01695 566863  
**Direct F** 01695 729320  
**Direct email:**  
[jbennett@cfbt.com](mailto:jbennett@cfbt.com)



23 September 2013

Mrs Laura Pooles  
Headteacher  
Sudell Primary School  
Sudell Road  
Darwen  
Lancashire  
BB3 3EB

Dear Mrs Pooles

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Sudell Primary School, Blackburn with Darwen**

Following my visit to your school on 20 September 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 June 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

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:

- commission an external review of the governing body to help governors identify their strengths and weaknesses and plan training accordingly to improve their effectiveness
- develop the skills and expertise of the governing body so governors are able to collect their own first-hand information about the school.

### **Evidence**

During my visit, meetings were held with yourself, senior leaders and managers, eight members of the governing body and a local authority officer to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The school improvement plan was evaluated and school data, including the unvalidated Key Stage 2 results were scrutinised. Minutes from governing body meetings and the school's monitoring records were also considered. We visited each classroom to observe pupils at work. I also met with a small group of pupils to gather their views on the school's progress.

## **Context**

Since the inspection in June, two teachers have left and two new teachers took up post in September 2013. The Year 2 teacher is on extended leave until Christmas. This class is being taught by a temporary teacher.

## **Main findings**

You are taking the inspection findings very seriously and have hit the ground running. Essential systems are in place to carefully check pupils' progress and to keep a close eye of the quality of teaching. You know every day counts. This sense of urgency is reflected in your detailed action plan which sets an ambitious but realistic route to help the school become good at the next inspection. Staff, senior leaders and members of the governing body are fully behind you in your drive to bring about improvement. Everyone accepts the inspection judgements are fair and there is a shared desire to succeed.

Your efforts to bring about improvement are making a difference. The unvalidated 2013 test results show more Year 6 pupils reached the levels expected for their age than in previous years. Nonetheless, as your own assessment information shows, this improving picture is not reflected across the whole school and in some year groups pupils are not making quick enough gains in their learning.

Teaching is beginning to improve. You have wisely chosen to return to basics so there is a shared understanding of your expectations for good teaching at Sudell Primary. Teachers are reflecting on their own performance, observing good practice and taking part in whole-school and individual training sessions. This is building teachers' confidence and refreshing their skills. Checks on teaching are frequent; you have already visited most classrooms since the beginning of September. This means, all teachers, whether they need extra help to improve or are already at the top of their game are being supported to become even better.

You are using internal expertise to help all teachers improve. For example, the programme of support for teaching reading means reading lessons are more purposeful, pupils are interested in books and reading standards are rising. The renewed focus on marking shows teachers are better at helping pupils know what they need to do to improve. Time is provided so pupils have the chance to read and act on teachers' comments. Pupils enjoy the increased opportunities to talk about their work and share their ideas with their class mates before they have to put pen to paper.

Although the governing body are highly supportive of the school, the planned actions to improve governance are weak. This is because governors are not absolutely clear what good governance looks like. Nevertheless they are keen to do their bit to ensure the school improves and does not slip back again in the future. They welcome the opportunity to take part in an external review of governance. Governors have taken immediate action to form a special committee to keep a tight watch of the school's progress and they have become more familiar with school

data. However, they are still in the early stages of finding out information about the school for themselves and rely on you too heavily to keep them informed.

Ofsted may carry out further visits and, where necessary, provide further support and challenge to the school until its next section 5 inspection.

### **External support**

You have been proactive in seeking out the best possible support to help you on your improvement journey, drawing on guidance from a neighbouring local authority as well as working with officers from Blackburn with Darwen. Additional support from the School Improvement Officer before and since the inspection has helped you draw up an action plan and enhanced your skills in checking on teaching. This has also had a positive impact in supporting improvements to teaching in some classrooms. However, not enough attention has been given to developing the effectiveness of the governing body. Links have been established with a successful partner schools, but these need to be exploited further to support individual teachers and members of the governing body.

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

Yours sincerely

Joanne Olsson  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**