

CfBT Inspection Services  
Suite 22  
West Lancs Investment Centre  
Maple View  
Skelmersdale  
WN8 9TG

T 0300 123 1231

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)



8 October 2013

Mr Jason Redmond  
Headteacher  
Flixton Junior School  
Delamere Road  
Flixton  
Urmston  
Manchester  
M41 5QL

Dear Mr Redmond

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Flixton Junior School**

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

Senior leaders and governors are not taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the last section 5 inspection and plans are not sharply focused on rapidly bringing about improvement. The school should take immediate action to:

- review and refine the post-inspection action plan to ensure that precise actions to tackle weaknesses in teaching and subject leadership are established, as a matter of urgency, in order to secure more rapid improvement
- tackle areas where weaker teaching exists through personalised training and support. There is an especial need to make more effective use of the time and expertise of the non-teaching deputy headteacher. In particular, teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve need to be raised and greater challenge provided in lessons, particularly for the more able

- commit to a clear curriculum model to ensure that teachers' subject knowledge is developed in order for them to teach the full range of subjects confidently
- make subject leaders accountable for clear impact in their areas of responsibility
- develop clear routines to ensure that marking and assessment are not just processes completed by teachers but are understood and acted on by pupils in order to improve their work.

## **Evidence**

During the visit I held meetings with you and your deputy headteacher, groups of pupils from Year 3 and Year 6, the Chair of Governors accompanied by another governor and with a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The school improvement plan and most recent performance data were evaluated. I took part in a learning walk with yourself and your deputy and observed teaching in all Years 4 to 6 classes. I also scrutinised the monitoring documentation you provided for me

## **Context**

Since the last inspection two teachers have left the school and two replacements have been appointed, including a newly qualified teacher. In addition, changes elsewhere have included staff changing year groups in a number of classes. The deputy headteacher is now a non-teaching deputy with a specific responsibility to support improvement, notably in teaching and learning. A new Chair of Governors has also been appointed.

## **Main findings**

Currently, the development plan is too complex. There is a strong focus on raising awareness of better classroom practice as well as monitoring and auditing provision. Equally the strategy to improve and develop senior management is well constructed. However, there are a lack of stratagems which will have an immediate impact on improving practice in the classroom such as developing teachers' subject knowledge and expertise. Equally, subject leadership responsibilities have been re-allocated but action plans for developing the subjects are not expected to be in place until April 2014. There needs to be a greater urgency in tackling the issues identified in the recent inspection.

The learning walk with yourself and your deputy did raise concerns about the slow pace of learning in some of the classes where pupils showed a lack of urgency in completing work. A brief look at books showed that the amount of work being completed by far too many pupils was insufficient. There was no evidence that this complacency was being sufficiently challenged. Many lessons appear to follow a formulaic approach that is not producing consistently good learning or sufficient challenge for all pupils, especially the more able. Year 3 and Year 6 pupils, when interviewed, remarked that they enjoyed school but also did not find much of the work particularly demanding, apart from mathematics, which has been a focus for

recent development. Year 6 pupils also identified that there were inconsistencies across classes both in the quality of work that they were expected to complete but also in the frequency and depth at which a range of subjects was taught. Pupils remarked that, although different tasks were set for different groups in English and mathematics, they usually had to complete the same work in other subjects. There is a consistent marking policy in place. However, improvement points do not always set a high enough challenge often focussing on very basic spelling, punctuation or presentation rather than on developing deeper thinking. Some disruptive behaviour, from a small number of pupils, is also hampering learning in Year 3.

Since the inspection senior managers have placed a greater emphasis on monitoring of pupils' work and teachers' planning and this has been pursued rigorously. However, there have been few lesson observations although learning walks have been common. These have identified some effective practice but also highlighted inconsistencies across classes and low expectations in too many of the activities being set. This monitoring has led to some plans to improve teaching through peer mentoring, sharing of effective practice and providing greater challenge. Unfortunately, application remains fragmented and the pace at which this is happening is too slow. Much better use could be made of the non-teaching deputy to focus on personalised support and challenge for those teachers who require it most. Support from an effective partner school is to be offered from November but, in the meantime, the school needs to get the momentum for improvement started.

Teachers have been allocated specific subject areas to lead and manage. However, there is no indication as to how they are going to support improvements in the classroom, or how quickly. Strategies to develop their role, so they can make a more effective contribution to learning in the classroom, are underdeveloped, lack cohesion or a clear sense of direction. There has been a lack of clarity about whether to teach subjects discretely or in an integrated way. The current commercially produced curriculum does not provide a cohesive or challenging experience for most pupils, it does not meet current requirements and will not meet future expectations. A quick decision needs to be made as to how the curriculum is to be structured. This will enable subject leaders to get on with their work and feed into improving classroom practice as a matter of urgency.

There has been a restructuring of governance. A new chair of governors with a background and expertise in education has recently been appointed. Governors recognise the need to be more involved in challenging leaders to increase the pace of improvement. Each has been allocated a subject to enable them to monitor and challenge developments across the curriculum. The chair has volunteered to use his expertise to help develop subject leadership. It is too early to identify the impact of these changes.

On the positive side there has been a noticeable overall improvement in national test scores in reading, writing and mathematics. In particular, almost a fifth of pupils gained level 6 in mathematics highlighting not only the positive impact of intervention strategies but also reinforcing what these pupils can achieve when teachers' expectations are high.

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**

Until recently, the school has had little support from the local authority. However, declining standards raised concerns and a review of provision by the local authority identified that the school was vulnerable. This was confirmed by the Ofsted inspection a week later. The school is now in line for more frequent monitoring visits and the local authority has agreed to monitor progress and update Her Majesty's Inspector on a regular basis. This will determine when a future visit may be appropriate. The school has been linked with a local good school to provide advice to senior managers and support for subject leaders. However, this is not due to start until November and a clear programme has not yet been determined.

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

Yours sincerely

Leszek Iwaskow

**Her Majesty's Inspector**