

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



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Mr Nick Toyne
Headteacher
Woolston Community Primary School
Barnfield Road
Woolston
Warrington
WA1 4NW

Dear Mr Toyne

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Woolston Community Primary School, Warrington

Following my visit to your school on 15 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 July 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:

- refine the improvement plan to identify key milestones so that the Governing Body and leaders can use them to check the impact of actions.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with senior leaders, pupils, governors and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the section 5 inspection. The school action plans, monitoring files and recent attainment and progress data were evaluated and learning walks taken around the school.

Context

Since the last inspection 4 teachers have joined the staff. One new local authority governor joined the governing body in September. The school very recently moved into its new purpose built building.

Main findings

Senior leaders remain committed to continued improvement following the removal of the school from a category of concern at the last Section 5 inspection. Standards have risen, shown by much better results in both Key Stage 1 and 2. However, senior leaders recognise there is still work to be done to ensure this school is a good one.

The Governing Body reviewed its effectiveness in holding senior leaders to account shortly after the inspection. As a result regular meetings of the school's monitoring committee to challenge senior leaders have been rightly continued due to its impact on school improvement.

Governors have a clear understanding of what needs to improve. They are working with a National Leader of Governance, initially, to complete an audit of their skills to identify any gaps that will require additional training.

New systems that allow leaders to evaluate the impact of teaching on small groups have been implemented but it is too early yet to see how useful they are.

Support for pupils paid for by pupil premium funding has been improved by the appointment of a teacher who is responsible for its delivery.

Senior leaders have taken appropriate actions to improve subject leadership and identified key subjects to concentrate on for development this year. They set clear expectations of what subject leaders must do and identify appropriate training priorities. They provide models of good practice that help subject leaders prepare reports on the impact of their actions.

Marking and feedback have continued to improve. The new system of green and pink marking piloted during the summer term has now been rolled out across the school. It helps pupils make their work better by celebrating success and identifying next steps for improvement. One pupil said; 'I can now see how I am improving and where I need to work more'.

Senior leaders have been quick to establish working links with other schools in the locality to improve opportunities for teachers to see and share good and outstanding practice. Links are appropriately focussed on raising standards, improving teaching and developing subject leadership particularly in writing, ICT and the new curriculum.

The school's action plan builds upon the effective work undertaken last year and has clear priorities for improvement based on the inspection. It sets final expectations but does not contain sufficient detail in its milestones to allow senior leaders to check that the plan is working during the year

The move from the old school building has been managed effectively, particularly for those pupils with special needs who attend the designated provision. Pupils have rapidly settled to learning in their new building and several stated that the new school helps them to learn more quickly.

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

The school has drawn effectively on local authority support. The local authority's link advisor has an accurate grasp on where the school needs to improve and has put into place appropriate resources, including the brokered support of a National Leader of Governance, to support this. The Local Authority has planned future visits to check improvement in the school. The Governing Body's capacity to hold leaders to account has been strengthened by the appointment of local authority governors with appropriate experiences and skills.

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

Yours sincerely

John Nixon

Her Majesty's Inspector