

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 566855
Direct F 01695 729320
Direct email:
gail.hill@cfbt.com



9 October 2013

Mrs Zoe Mabbott
Acting headteacher
St Joseph's Roman Catholic Primary School,
Huttock End Lane
Stacksteads
Bacup
Lancashire
OL13 8LD

Dear Mrs Mabbott

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to St Joseph's Roman Catholic Primary School, Stacksteads, Bacup, Lancashire

Following my visit to your school on 8 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 second monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in December 2012. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

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

- Improve attendance for the small minority of pupils who are persistently absent.
- Continue to address teaching that is not consistently good in the combined Year 3 and Year 4 class and the combined Year 1 and Year 2 class
- Sharpen the use of risk assessments for children arriving at and leaving school
Encourage parents to record their views on Parent View.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you, a group of pupils and governors. The school improvement plan and self-evaluation documentation were evaluated. Lessons were observed and books were scrutinised. I also had the opportunity to speak with some parents in the school yard.

Context

Since the previous monitoring visit the headteacher has retired and an acting headteacher has been seconded from a good school in a neighbouring local authority and has been in post since the beginning of September. A permanent headteacher has been appointed and will take up post in January 2014. There are 4 classes of combined year groups in school.

Main findings

You have not wasted any time in identifying and tackling teaching that is not consistently good. You have drawn on your own extensive experience to quickly evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the school. You have rightly identified the strong provision in the Reception and Year 1 class and in the Year 5 and Year 6 class. In the other two classes teaching continues to require improvement. The school environment is much more stimulating as a result of some very creative displays and greater celebration of pupils' achievements. A reward culture has been created and pupils gain greater recognition for many things including attendance, smart lining up in the yard and respectful behaviour in the dining room.

Achievement is much improved at Key Stage 2 and weaknesses in achievement at Key Stage 1 are being vigorously tackled. The achievement of different groups is now effectively tracked and senior leaders can show that gaps in achievement are closing. The proportions of pupils making better than expected progress in reading, writing and mathematics are well above national averages.

Some very strong teaching of phonics was seen in the Reception and Year 1 class. The teacher modelled the sounds of letters and made good use of her learning support assistant to reinforce correct pronunciation. All pupils made good progress and enriched their vocabulary by applying these sounds to new words. However, the teaching of phonics is not as strong when support assistants work with groups on their own.

Year 5 and Year 6 pupils were also observed learning about the Second World War. Pupils eagerly investigated the effects that the Second World War had on people's lives and the reasons for the war starting. They were able to try on soldiers' hats and examine ration books to the deafening sound of air raid sirens. Such an array of primary sources from the local library really brought learning to life and fuelled their imaginations.

Whilst attendance is good for some children, overall attendance is low; a small minority of children are persistently absent from school. You are introducing new attendance policies and procedures in response to this but it is too early to measure the impact.

You and the deputy headteacher are monitoring standards much more thoroughly. She is improving the day to day provision for those who are disabled or have special educational needs. For example, individual support is now more tightly focussed and the impact of this support is monitored regularly. The deputy headteacher has also put together a comprehensive induction package for those who join the school at different times during the school year so that any gaps in their attainment on entry to the school are quickly closed. Subject leaders are now monitoring and tracking progress. They are being more evaluative and reporting regularly to governors.

Governors now have a good understanding of the key issues the school must tackle in order for pupils to make consistently good progress. Their passion for improving St Joseph's is boundless. They are working closely with senior leaders and have made clear that they will do 'whatever it takes' to make the school a good one. They have worked hard to learn about the progress of different groups within school and the strengths and weaknesses of teaching. Their single focus is to improve the life chances of the pupils they serve.

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

Support from the local authority has been swift and robust. It has worked in conjunction with Salford Diocese to support the governing body in appointing a substantive headteacher. It has also secured a highly effective acting headteacher for the autumn term. The school has fully engaged with a comprehensive programme of support and professional development provided by the school adviser and consultants to develop teaching skills, to accurately evaluate standards and make effective use of assessment data. The leadership team and governors have been supported with action planning and in gaining a very accurate understanding of current standards.

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

Yours sincerely

Sally Kenyon

Her Majesty's Inspector