

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
Direct T 01695 566 857
Direct F 01695 729 320
Direct email: jkinsman@cfbt.com



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Mr Malcolm White
Headteacher
The Brow Community Primary School
The Clough
Halton Brow
Runcorn
Cheshire
WA7 2HB

Dear Mr White

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to The Brow Community Primary School, Halton

Following my visit to your school on 1 November 2013, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report 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.

My judgement is that senior leaders and governors are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection.

Evidence

During the visit, discussions were held with: you, your deputy headteacher and the subject leader for English; the Acting Chair of the Governing Body and a parent governor; an external consultant acting in the role of a School Improvement Partner; a representative of the local authority; and seven pupils from Years 2 and 3. The school improvement plans were evaluated. In addition, I toured the school with your deputy headteacher. I also looked at records of observations of lessons and scrutinies of pupils' work in English and mathematics.

Context

Since the June 2013 inspection a number of teaching staff have moved to different year groups. A newly qualified teacher has been appointed to Key Stage 1. In addition, a new Chair of the Governing Body is to be elected at the next meeting of governors.

Main findings

Even though the school found the outcome of the 2013 inspection disappointing, actions to bring about improvements have been swift. The new policy for marking pupils' work and providing feedback, for example, is already an established part of school life. Examples seen in pupils' work in English and mathematics show comments and targets readily shared between teachers and pupils. This is involving pupils more in their day-to-day learning.

There is a more regular and rigorous approach to judging the quality of teaching and learning through observations of lessons and checking pupils' work in their books. The graduated targets for how much teaching is to be good or better – leading to all being of this quality by February 2015 – are ambitious and realistic. Good use has been made of the external consultant, your deputy headteacher and the subject leader for English to build up an increasingly wide evidence base. We agreed the records produced by school staff could be enhanced further if they gave greater emphasis to the learning made by pupils as opposed to describing what teachers and pupils have done. Nevertheless, the work observed in pupils' books and the learning seen during my tour of the school points to good levels of enjoyment. Younger pupils in particular were enthralled by the broomsticks they were drawing and the potions they were making as part of their 'Spooky Halloween' work. Pupils described confidently and with relish the ingredients of bats, rats, worms and monkey snot they were mixing in order to turn members of staff into frogs! I also observed Key Stage 2 pupils eager to talk about their work, for example in preparing persuasive arguments relating to next summer's leaving celebrations for Year 6 pupils.

The plans you have in place make clear the school's intention to be at least good at its next inspection. While challenging in content, we agreed that when the success of these plans is reviewed, particular regard should be given to any improvements made in Key Stage 1. This would reflect the recommendations made by inspectors in June 2013. The targets you have set for average rates of progress to be made by pupils are also ambitious. The work scrutinies of English and mathematics are providing a helpful baseline for teachers to set appropriate targets for individual pupils, groups and classes. In terms of checking how successful the actions taken to achieve these targets have been, we agreed each class should have bespoke targets for each group of pupils. This means some pupils will have targets higher than the average, while others, depending on their starting points may have ones that are lower. We also agreed that when leaders are held to account for the progress being

made, reports should be presented to show pupil progress across the whole school, within classes and within groups.

The two governors I spoke with during my visit had a good understanding of the school's strengths and what needs to be done to improve. An external review of governance will take place in November 2013 during which interviews will be held with individual governors and the body as a whole. In addition, both you and the Acting Chair are actively seeking ways of ensuring the minutes of meetings reflect the debate and challenges members provide.

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

Additional input from HMI

- In the spring term 2014, I will work with you and your senior leaders to ascertain whether or not the quality of teaching and learning in Key Stage 1 is getting to good. This work will involve your senior leaders and me observing lessons jointly, looking together at pupils' work across all subjects and holding discussions with teachers and teaching assistants in this key stage.
- In the latter part of the Summer term 2014, once teacher and national assessments of pupils' attainment are available, I will work with you and your senior leaders to gauge your analysis of pupils' achievement across the school, and particularly so in Key Stage 1.

External support

A range of potentially good support from a number of external partners, including the external consultant and the local authority has been established. The timescales for this support is sensible. We agreed that it would be beneficial if all partners ensured that this support does not ask too much at any one time. While it is too early to see the impact of this support on outcomes for pupils, you, your governors and leaders have been galvanised to ensure you can present compelling evidence to demonstrate improvements in teaching and learning. This is seen in the more regular and rigorous approach to gathering evidence about the quality of teaching and learning over time.

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

Yours sincerely

Mark Williams

Her Majesty's Inspector