

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

T 0300 123 1231
Text Phone: 0161 618 8524
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk

Direct T 01695 566932
Direct F 01695 729320
Direct email: hcarnall@cfbt.com



26 November 2013

Mr Geoff Norman
Headteacher
Longtown Primary School
Mary Street
Longtown
Carlisle
Cumbria
CA6 5UG

Dear Mr Norman

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Longtown Primary School, Cumbria

Following my visit to your school on 25 November 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 September 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:

- sharpen the plans to improve the school by including details of when actions are to be completed and how governors will check on progress
- ensure reviews of school performance by leaders and governors, and pupils' progress by teachers, take place frequently enough to check that development remains sufficiently rapid
- continue to develop the skills, confidence and impact of the governing body
- provide clearer information to teachers in feedback on lesson observations and in plans for training linked to their performance management
- ensure that policies, including the marking policy, once agreed, are used consistently by all members of staff

Evidence

Meetings were held with: the headteacher; subject leaders for mathematics, reading and writing; pupils; members of the Governing Body and a representative of the local authority. The school's Ofsted action plan and other documents were evaluated. Samples of pupils' work were reviewed.

Context

The Governing Body has one new member. One teacher has returned from an extended absence.

Main findings

Teaching is improving. Pupils are making more rapid progress. Mathematics teaching includes more use of interactive resources and practical activities, for example, Year 3 pupils use paper counters and bowls to learn about fractions. These help pupils to understand what they are learning. However, teachers are not using all opportunities to further develop mathematics skills in other lessons. Teachers set appropriately challenging targets in English and mathematics which enable pupils to understand the areas they need to work on. The targets are individually discussed, reviewed and revised when each pupil is ready. Pupils explain how the targets are helping them improve and are motivated by achieving them. Marking is still inconsistent despite the policy being reviewed. When teachers clearly record ways pupils can improve their written work, pupils respond well.

Leaders have carefully considered what they can learn from last year's disappointing national test results. More detailed information about the standards pupils are expected to reach is being used by teachers and governors. However, this information does not identify clearly enough the progress pupils need to make to ensure gains are sufficiently rapid. Teachers formally review the progress that each pupil is making once a term. This is too infrequent to ensure that teachers respond quickly to developments in pupils' learning.

Leaders have used the new teacher appraisal system to ensure that teachers understand what is expected of them. However, actions are not detailed nor precise enough to effectively support teachers' individual targets. Leaders use lesson observations systematically to check on classroom practice. The records of the observations identify strengths and weaknesses but do not give unequivocal judgements on aspects such as achievement and teaching, this reduces their impact.

School leaders have prepared an appropriate plan of action following the Ofsted inspection. This has been agreed by governors. This plan includes details of when actions are to be completed. However, this is not the case in the separate plans written to improve mathematics, reading and writing. Nor are milestones evident in the existing school improvement plan. This reduces the precision and urgency of the actions and means that it is harder to use successful development to support further progress. Governors are still to confirm how they will be involved in monitoring and evaluating the plans.

Governors are committed to improving their understanding of the school and the ways in which they challenge it to improve. Meetings have been used for training on the role of governors and further work is planned. Arrangements to link governors to subjects and year groups have been re-started. The Governing Body has established a school improvement committee but the termly meetings of this group are too infrequent to provide sufficient and timely challenge.

A senior leader will be working as acting headteacher in another school from January and for the remainder of the school year. Governors and the headteacher have already arranged for other teachers to share the leadership responsibility and cover the teaching required. These are sensible steps to ensure that the change will not slow the improvement at Longtown Primary School.

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 local authority has provided good support for the school. This has included discussion with, and challenge to, the headteacher and effective training and support to the Governing Body. The school's links with its partners in its local cluster of schools are effective. They have led to planned work with a school where governance is strong and shared development of approaches to teaching mathematics.

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

Yours sincerely

David Selby
Her Majesty's Inspector