

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 566933
Direct F 01695 729320
Direct email:
ggleaden@cfbt.com



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Mrs Carole Fulstow
Headteacher
Pocklington Community Junior School
65 Kirkland Street
Pocklington
York
North Yorkshire
YO42 2BX

Dear Mrs Fulstow

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Pocklington Community Junior School, East Riding of Yorkshire

Following my visit with Cathryn Kirby, Her Majesty's Inspector, to your school on 3 December 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:

- ensure that the headteacher, when judging the quality of teaching, takes account of the quality of marking and its impact on pupils' learning and the impact of teaching on pupils' progress over time, in addition to lesson observations
- ensure that as the governing body's new ways of working become established, governors with individual responsibilities meet together formally to share their views on the impact of school improvement work
- ensure that the local authority works quickly with the headteacher to set up and monitor a link with an outstanding school so that this partnership accelerates improvement.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you, senior leaders with responsibility for mathematics and special educational needs, members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority. I reviewed a range of documentation, including the school's improvement plan and undertook a tour of the school.

Context

One teacher remains on long term absence and another has returned to the school after a 12 month absence. The governing body are in the process of reviewing their structures, roles and responsibilities. These will be completed by January 2014.

Main findings

The recent inspection has reinvigorated the school in its drive for improvement. You are keen to move forward quickly and together with senior leaders and governors, have developed a plan to tackle each of the areas identified as requiring improvement. This includes clear, ambitious targets with the intention of getting the school to good or better at the next inspection. All key partners are clear in the expectations for more rapid and sustained improvement. Targets have been broken down into smaller steps across the year and this feature of the plan is particularly welcomed by governors who can now hold the school more fully to account for the progress it is making

Actions have already been taken in key areas such as mathematics and special educational needs to identify why strategies implemented in the past have not had as much impact on pupil outcomes as desired. New approaches, for example the more detailed assessment of pupils' knowledge in mathematics, are leading to more tailored teaching across the school as teachers become more aware of pupils' specific gaps in understanding. Agreed approaches to marking and feedback are becoming consistent across all classes; pupils now understand their teacher's comments and their more frequent responses to feedback are helping them to make faster progress. These new initiatives need to be monitored and evaluated more rigorously than the actions of the past if they are to have greater impact on the quality of teaching and pupil outcomes.

While you and other school leaders look at pupils' workbooks, observe lessons and discuss the progress of individual pupils over time, you do not cross-reference these separate sources of evidence to give a reliable view of the quality of teaching over time. Too great an emphasis on a 'snap-shot' sample of lesson observations risks an over-generous view of teaching and increases the potential for teachers to misunderstand how far teaching still needs to improve.

Governors have welcomed the support and challenge offered by the local authority in explaining their responsibilities to ensure the school quickly improves. They demonstrate a clear intent to make a difference to the school. Specific committees and individual governors have been linked to each area identified as requiring improvement to enable governors to understand the position of the school more clearly, ask the right questions and begin to challenge senior leaders where improvement has not been quick enough. It is imperative that these committees and link governors meet formally so that there is constant dialogue about the overall picture of school improvement.

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 supported you in evaluating the impact of recent actions and identifying where further refinement is needed to maximise the difference new initiatives are making to the quality of teaching and learning. Your established partnership with a local cluster of schools is providing access to a wider network of support, especially regarding the accuracy of assessment, and this is helping to improve teaching. However, plans to link with an outstanding school have been slow to develop. The local authority, as a matter of urgency, should work with you to set-up and monitor this link so that partnership between schools accelerates overall improvement.

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

Yours sincerely

Lee Owston

Her Majesty's Inspector