

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 566868
Direct F 01695 729320
Direct email:
pnuttie@cfbt.com



20 January 2014

Mrs Anne-Marie Armstrong
Headteacher
Newsham Primary School
Warwick Street
Blyth
Northumberland
NE24 4NX

Dear Mrs Armstrong

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Newsham Primary School, Northumberland

Following my visit to your school on 17 January 2014, 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 October 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:

- further develop governance in the school to ensure challenge is maintained
- further develop and extend the roles of middle leaders so that they can play a robust and consistent part in monitoring and evaluating the work in the key areas which require improvement
- provide updated information to parents and carers about the progress that is being made towards becoming a good school.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with the headteacher and other senior and middle leaders, a group of Year 2 and a group of Year 6 pupils, the Chair of the Governing Body, four members of the support team and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The school improvement plan was evaluated. I also spoke to the whole staff and spent time in the weekly celebration assembly.

Context

Since the section 5 inspection, which judged the school to require improvement, a new Chair of the Governing Body has been appointed.

Main findings

The school has moved swiftly to address the issues identified by the recent section 5 inspection particularly in relation to teaching and leadership. A detailed post inspection plan has been drawn up which specifically identifies how the school will respond to the three improvement areas raised in the report. The plan has a wide authorship and a wide range of staff and governors is involved in its review and update. The plan is detailed and focuses on what needs to be done. There is a robust set of actions with related measures of their impact on learning in the school. Working with an adviser, middle and key stage leaders at the school have worked hard to improve their classroom observation and moderation skills so that they are better able to make robust judgements, informed by higher expectations and more secure knowledge, about the effectiveness of teaching and the accuracy of assessments of pupils' work. The headteacher and deputy have worked quickly to involve the full range of staff and adults in the school in its improvement. Teaching assistants report that they are now fully involved in planning and have a wider range of opportunities to develop their skills and offer their expertise. Inspection evidence confirms their growing confidence in supporting pupils' learning. The review of the governing body has helped to sharpen the focus on its activities. The governing body has set up a steering group, facilitated by the local authority. This meets regularly and assesses the impact of the school's actions as it improves. The governing body is more closely engaged with the work of the school, drawing its conclusions on the quality of teaching and learning from a wider range of sources. As well as engaging with the headteacher and her team, individual and groups of governors are more closely linked with key stages and other areas of the school's work and are focusing their evaluations on areas, such as boys' achievement, safeguarding and standards. The Chair of the Governing Body meets with the headteacher each fortnight to review the evidence of progress.

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 is now providing effective support to the steering group and to the wider school. The school has chosen to buy services from a local contractor, Linda Buller, who has worked, especially, with key stage 1, to improve the quality and consistency of teaching and learning. The local authority will maintain a key monitoring function in the school through its link adviser and she will work with the contractor and the school. The Chair of the Governing Body of a local successful school is offering support to the governing body. The local authority will continue to support governance at the school.

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

Yours sincerely

Mark Evans

Her Majesty's Inspector

The letter should be copied to the following:

- Appropriate authority - Chair of the Governing Body
- Local authority