

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 566862
Direct F 01695 729320
Direct email:
rcowley@cfbt.com



31 January 2014

Mrs Carole Hedley
Headteacher
Otterburn First School
Otterburn
Newcastle-upon-Tyne
Tyne and Wear
NE19 1JF

Dear Mrs Hedley

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Otterburn First School, Northumberland

Following my visit to your school on 30 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 not taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the last section 5 inspection and plans are not sharply focused on rapidly bringing about improvement. The school should take immediate action to:

- ensure that a review of governance takes place as a matter of urgency and that the school acts promptly and effectively on its findings
- ensure that senior leaders and governors act with urgency to address the issues identified in the recent section 5 inspection
- refine and sharpen the focus of the school improvement plan so it can be used by leaders, including governors, to accurately measure the impact of their work in tackling the school's weaknesses
- 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 you, the literacy co-ordinator, members of the Governing Body, including the Chair of Governors, and representatives of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The school improvement plans were evaluated.

Main findings

The school is not addressing the issues outlined in the recent Section 5 inspection with enough drive and determination. The local authority has been too slow in helping the school address the issues relating to, especially, the quality of teaching and leadership.

Since the inspection the school's leadership has begun to involve partner schools to help them improve their judgements about the quality of teaching and the accuracy of the assessment of pupils' progress. However, this is taking too long because there is a lack of urgency and focus to this work. For example, although classroom observations are now taking place, they are not happening regularly enough and the criteria used to underpin judgements do not show the impact of teaching on the progress of pupils. The headteacher and subject leaders do not have the skills, experience or expertise to undertake this work and the local authority has not moved swiftly enough to support them.

The school's improvement plan is not detailed enough, especially in its description of how the impact of actions taken by the school will be measured. The timescales are too vague and it is not clear who within the school will evaluate the impact of actions taken.

The governing body has set up a sub group to check on the school's progress since the recent Section 5 inspection and this meets regularly. However, as the school's plan does not outline explicitly how the governing body will fulfil its monitoring role their work is severely hampered.

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 not supported the school effectively in addressing the issues outlined in the recent inspection. Too much effort has been spent on engaging with leadership structures rather than supporting the improvement of work in classrooms. However, more recently, the authority has worked to develop closer links with local partner schools in order to broker support. Additionally, the headteacher has established links with Cambo First School, an outstanding school, to add expertise to the school, especially around the monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning. These initiatives are recent and there is no discernible effect evident.

The local authority has agreed to initiate and oversee a review of governance. This review must be undertaken as a matter of urgency.

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