

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 566855
Direct F 01695 729320
Direct email:
gail.hill@cfbt.com



7 February 2014

Mr Trevor Hutchinson
Headteacher
Ayresome Primary School
Worcester Street
Middlesbrough
North Yorkshire
TS1 4NT

Dear Mr Hutchinson

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Ayresome Primary School, Middlesbrough

Following my visit to your school on 6 February 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 November 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 school improvement plan so that leaders can measure more closely whether new initiatives are making the intended difference to pupils' progress
- refine the performance targets given to staff so that they reflect your highest ambition for pupils' progress rather than the minimum expected by the end of the year.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you, other senior leaders, the Chair and vice-chair of the Governing Body and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. I reviewed a range of documentation, including the school's improvement plan, and undertook a brief tour of the school.

Context

Three teachers are currently absent from school; one of these on maternity leave. One class is currently being taught by a temporary teacher. One member of staff will retire at the end of the spring term.

Main findings

You, senior leaders and governors have acted quickly to the outcome of the recent inspection despite some initial disappointment with the overall judgement. No time has been wasted in getting to work on the areas for improvement identified in the November report. Your clearly articulated expectations for rapid improvement, together with clarified roles and responsibilities amongst leaders, are helping you to realise your drive for change. Staff have taken your reinvigorated approach on board and are whole-heartedly stepping up to the mark. There is a strong momentum for improving the school.

Much has already been done in response to the need to improve the quality of teaching and increase rates of progress in mathematics. The calculation policy has been reviewed, staff have received training in how mathematical skills progress from year-to-year and vibrant mathematics displays, along corridors and within classrooms, testify to the higher profile now being given to the subject. Teachers report that they now feel more confident in teaching mathematics and pupils themselves have noticed the increased support available to them on their classroom walls, which they say they are using more frequently to help them when they are stuck. Current assessment information shows that these actions are already making a difference to the progress pupils make.

Senior leaders have tightened their procedures for checking on the quality of teaching. Individual support plans are now in place for each teacher that document the steps each member of staff needs to take to improve their own practice. Exactly how far each teacher has progressed is monitored closely by senior leaders so that specific improvements are brought about within a limited amount of time. However, while the targets given to staff reflect the progress their pupils are expected to make as an outcome of the improvements to their teaching, they only present the minimum expectations of progress across the year rather than the ambitious targets you have discussed as a senior leadership team. This risks presenting a 'glass ceiling' to staff in terms of what you expect them to achieve and may result in slower progress if not clarified quickly.

The school improvement plan follows closely the areas for improvement identified in your most recent inspection. Importantly, it also acknowledges other aspects in need of improvement, such as weaknesses in pupils' grammar, punctuation and spelling, that you have rightly identified as necessary to becoming a good school overall. Planned actions are underpinned by specific milestones against which the impact of actions can be systematically monitored and evaluated. However, some of the targets within the plan are not as sharp as they could be, particularly in relation to the progress you expect of different groups of pupils.

The governing body is working closely with you, senior leaders and the local authority to ensure that progress is tracked and evaluated critically. The raising achievement committee now meets more regularly to review the school development plan and governors are gathering a greater range of evidence at first-hand to enable them to challenge you and other leaders more rigorously. Governors demonstrate a clear intent to make a difference to the school, but weaknesses in the plan, identified above, make it difficult for governors and leaders to pinpoint with precision the difference new initiatives are making to pupils' learning and progress over time.

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 significantly increased its support to the school since the November inspection. Senior officers have quickly undertaken a review of mathematics teaching, at the request of the headteacher, to identify with forensic precision the issues affecting slower progress in this subject. The outcomes of this review have been built into the overall improvement plan and are reflected in the support plans identified for each teacher. This is supporting more rapid improvements to the quality of teaching.

Links with a local teaching school alliance are currently being forged to support both leadership and teaching. The school is also in the process of brokering the external support of an independent consultant to further strengthen improvements to mathematics.

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

Yours sincerely

Lee Owston

Her Majesty's Inspector