

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



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Ms Anne Lawler
Headteacher
Mossgate Primary School
Kingsway
Heysham
Morecambe
Lancashire
LA3 2EE

Dear Ms Lawler

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Mossgate Primary School, Lancashire

Following my visit to your school on 25 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.

Evidence

During the visit, I held meetings with you, the deputy headteacher, both assistant headteachers, the Vice Chair of the Governing Body and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The school improvement plan was evaluated. Brief visits were made to all classes and informal discussions were held with pupils. I considered the school's records of the quality of teaching and your analysis of the progress being made by pupils currently in school.

Context

There have been no changes to staffing or governance since the section 5 inspection.

Main findings

You and your senior leaders have acted with urgency and ambition to produce and implement a detailed plan that fully addresses the areas for improvement identified as a result of the recent inspection. The plan was drawn up in consultation with staff and gives a clear set of expectations as to when actions will be completed, by whom and with what intended impact. Actions within the plan are appropriately staggered and there is a sensible balance between success that can be secured through sharing good practice within school and that which can best be supported through liaison with other schools in the authority. The governing body, through its standards and effectiveness committee, has a robust schedule for evaluating the impact of the plan. A small team of governors considers the school's data in forensic detail so that they are able to ask searching questions of the headteacher. Governors are well-informed and undertake their duties diligently.

Shortly prior to the section 5 inspection, the leadership of the school had been strengthened by the appointment of two assistant headteachers with specialisms in literacy and mathematics teaching. The impact of their appointment is now being seen through the capacity of leaders to provide specific individual support to teachers and to monitor and evaluate the school's work with considerable precision. The school's leaders work as a cohesive team and have shared high expectations. Similarly, staff have strong morale and a common direction. Communication is effective within the school and the openness and honesty of staff means that they are benefiting from giving and receiving support. The school has developed a new coaching system whereby teachers can undertake paired observations of leaders' teaching and then analyse the impact of particular strategies on pupils' learning. This initiative has enhanced the school's ability to share good practice.

Teachers are working hard to improve the quality of pupils' writing. The literacy leader provides clear guidance to staff and has led training that has been well-received. Pupils enjoy exciting tasks that encourage them to use their imagination and understand the features of different text types. There is a drive to improve the quality of pupils' written work through redrafting and editing, paying attention to language choices. The quality of written presentation has also been enhanced. Pupils have individual writing targets so that they know which areas they need to improve, and how. Lively displays throughout the school celebrate pupils' success in writing. Year 5 pupils are collating features for a newspaper and there are plenty of other examples of writing being undertaken for a purpose and audience. The school's tracking indicates that pupils are increasingly successful in using spelling punctuation and grammar accurately. Pupils now use individual spelling card to develop their skills.

The school's impetus to improve mathematics teaching has remained strong. The mathematics leader has provided staff training sessions and specific advice. Pupils throughout the school have number targets that enable them to judge their own progress. Pupils are keen to beat their own personal best marks so as to excel as mathematicians. Year 6 pupils have discussed with their teacher how their learning in mathematics can be made even better and she has designed different approaches in response to their feedback, in main mathematics lessons and during intervention sessions that are characterised by pace and challenge.

The school's tracking of interventions for groups of pupils is detailed and robust, enabling leaders and governors to have ready understanding of the strategies that are working well and providing value for money.

The school's records indicate an improving picture in terms of the progress being made across year groups and subjects. The achievement of different groups of pupils, including those eligible for pupil premium and those who are higher-attaining, is closely monitored. There are encouraging signs from tests, teachers' assessments, pupils' work in books and evidence from lesson observations that attainment is rising. Attendance is above the national average and there have been no recent exclusions. The school's monitoring indicates that pupils' attitudes to learning are positive, such as shown through their enthusiastic response to topic-based homework.

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 adviser has a very good understanding of the school's context. She provides valuable support to you and will attend the governors' standards and effectiveness committee on a termly basis to quality assure the work of the school's leaders and governors. She has brokered relationships with two Lancashire schools to support specific aspects of improvement in a timely way. A teaching and learning consultant from the local authority is providing some input to staff. The support package has been negotiated with the school and is proportionate to need; the strengths of the school's own leadership team have been recognised and duplication of effort has been avoided. The school is an active member of a local consortium of schools that work in partnership to support curriculum development and moderate pupils' work. A local authority adviser within the monitoring and intervention team will undertake external monitoring of the school's performance.

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

Yours sincerely

Shirley Gornall
Her Majesty's Inspector