

CfBT Inspection Services
Suite 22
West Lancs Investment Centre
Maple View
Skelmersdale
WN8 9TG

T 0300 123 1231

Text Phone: 0161 618 8524

enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

www.ofsted.gov.uk

D Direct T 01695 566939

Direct F 01695 729320

Direct email: glaw@cfbt.com



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Mr Paul Heaton
Executive Headteacher
Holy Infant and St Anthony RC Primary School
Mitre Street
Astley Bridge
Bolton
Lancashire
BL1 6QJ

Dear Mr Heaton

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Holy Infant and St Anthony RC Primary School, Bolton

Following my visit to your school on 3 March 2014, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the findings. 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.

Evidence

During the visit, I held meetings with you, a group of pupils, representatives of the governing body and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. I evaluated the school's improvement plan and scrutinised other documentation supplied by the school. I undertook a learning walk accompanied by you and the other executive headteacher to observe teaching across a range of classes.

Context

Since the inspection, a new headteacher has been appointed. She is due to take up post in September 2014.

Main findings

While disappointed and not fully in agreement with the outcome of the inspection, you accept that the areas for improvement provide a useful structure for improving the school, and have set about responding positively to the inspection's findings. The school's improvement plan is organised effectively around the areas for improvement identified. It has appropriately demanding targets and includes key milestones for the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement. Some other success criteria could be sharpened and/or quantified further.

The school has put considerable time into developing further its strategy to improve pupils' reading. Supported by links with your 'home' school, staff are beginning to strengthen their teaching of phonics and their confidence in using guided reading. Similarly, teachers have accepted the need to improve the quality of boys' writing and you have modified the curriculum appropriately. It is too soon to evaluate the impact of these initiatives. The school's records show that additional support to boost the performance of identified pupils has had a positive impact for most of the targeted pupils.

Teachers are beginning to make more routine use of assessment opportunities in lessons. Pupils say they value the increased focus on 'fix it' time that helps them to reflect on their learning and respond to teachers' comments.

While you believe that, over time, the effective deployment of teaching staff and better teaching are helping to overcome a legacy of underachievement in the school, you fully accept the need for continued focus on improving the quality of teaching. Lesson observation records show that senior leaders are focusing on appropriate aspects of teaching. However, some lesson feedback gives too much emphasis to what the teacher is doing rather than what the pupils are learning.

The appointment of a new headteacher, although too recent to have yet had any impact, provides the school with additional opportunities to plan for the long term. Senior and middle leaders are helping to strengthen the school's capacity to improve by developing their expertise, such as through attending external courses. A newly introduced data management system is enabling managers to monitor pupils' progress in more detail.

Along with the local authority and the diocese, governors played a central role in the appointment of the new headteacher. Since the inspection, governors have continued to develop and/or update their expertise in areas such as recruitment practices and the analysis of school data.

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

Since the inspection, a local authority officer has undertaken a one-day support visit, which included an assessment of teaching. Feedback from the visit provided the school with useful pointers on how teaching can be improved further. The local authority has also provided expertise to help improve provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage, initially in planning the development of its outdoor learning area. The school has drawn on support from the local authority for providing staff training in the use of information and communication technology (ICT). Following modification of the school's curriculum and an enhancement of facilities, students say they are enjoying their ICT more.

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

Yours sincerely

Paul Chambers
Her Majesty's Inspector