

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 566 937
Direct F 01695 729 320
Direct email:
jsimmons@cfbt.com



21 March 2014

Mrs Mandy Pickles
Headteacher
Ackton Pastures Primary School
College Grove
Whitwood
Castleford
West Yorkshire
WF10 5NS

Dear Mrs Pickles

Special measures monitoring inspection of Ackton Pastures Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 19 and 20 March 2014, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave during the inspection and for the time you made available to discuss the actions which have been taken since the school's previous monitoring inspection.

The inspection was the third monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in March 2013. The full list of the areas for improvement which were identified during that inspection is set out in the annex to this letter. The monitoring inspection report is attached.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time:

The school is making reasonable progress towards the removal of special measures.

The school may not appoint newly qualified teachers before the next monitoring inspection.

This letter and monitoring inspection report will be published on the Ofsted website. I am copying this letter and the monitoring inspection report to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Governing Body and the Corporate Director, Children and Young People for Wakefield.

Yours sincerely

Steve Isherwood

Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in March 2013:

- Eliminate inadequate teaching and improve the proportion that is at least good in order to rapidly accelerate pupils' progress by:
 - ensuring teachers in each class plan lessons that meet the needs and abilities of all pupils
 - reducing the amount of time that pupils spend sitting down and listening to teachers so that they can more quickly become actively engaged in learning
 - providing more tasks and activities which interest pupils so they are less likely to lose concentration.

- Raise standards in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Year 2 and Year 6 and ensure pupils make at least the expected progress in English and mathematics across both key stages by:
 - implementing consistent approaches to the teaching of reading, writing and mathematics, monitoring their impact and taking prompt action to address any emerging weaknesses
 - making sure teachers know how well pupils are doing and plan lessons that help pupils to learn more, and more quickly
 - planning lessons that capture pupils' interest and give them more time to speak, contribute, do things for themselves, and opportunities to cooperate and work with other pupils.

- Improve the impact of the school's leaders by:
 - developing their ability to check and improve the quality of teaching
 - developing all teachers' ability to analyse how well different groups of pupils are making progress and adapting plans, where needed, to ensure more rapid progress for all
 - providing leaders of all subjects and aspects of management with the knowledge and skills to lead and manage their areas effectively
 - implementing more robustly the strategies to improve the attendance of pupils who are persistent absentees

- Improve the effectiveness of governance by:
 - improving governors' knowledge of the school's work, including the quality of teaching
 - ensuring governors carry out checks on the impact of the school's actions and the extent to which these are accelerating pupils' progress and raising their attainment
 - ensuring governors hold senior leaders to account for their effectiveness.

An external review of governance is required.

Report on the third monitoring inspection on 19 to 20 March 2014.

Evidence

The inspector observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with senior leaders, a group of pupils, a specialist leader of education, members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority.

Context

Since the previous inspection there have been significant changes to staffing, particularly in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Elsewhere, staff absences and phased returns to school have continued, resulting in further changes to year groups and areas of responsibility. In addition, the school has been supported by a specialist leader of education and an advisory teacher to strengthen provision.

Achievement of pupils at the school

The school has moved on considerably in the weeks since the last monitoring inspection. There are positive signs in lessons, in pupils' work and from school data that the pace of learning is advancing for most groups of learners. Pupils across the school in the majority of year groups are catching up and closing gaps in their learning. For example, increasing numbers of pupils have made expected and better than expected progress in reading, writing and mathematics over the last year. Eighty per cent of pupils currently in Year 3 and 4 have achieved the levels expected for their age. Pupils known to be eligible for support through the pupil premium are making better progress than previously. Gaps in the attainment for these pupils and their peers are closing significantly. A notable success is that in 2013 these pupils did better than similar pupils nationally.

This better picture has come about because of a tighter focus in lessons on what pupils need to know and reflects the improving impact of the school's intervention work because tracking systems are more effective in identifying pupils who are at risk of falling behind. Furthermore, the school is in a much stronger position to identify the links between attainment, the quality of provision and the progress pupils make.

Nevertheless, while improving, standards for higher-attaining pupils, particularly in mathematics, are not yet high enough. Not enough pupils are reaching the higher levels. Senior leaders are well aware that at times the tasks set for pupils of higher ability are not always demanding enough and are restricted to composing a longer piece of writing or tackling a harder sum with insufficient attention given to the higher-order thinking skills that pupils need, such as the ability to infer, deduce, hypothesise and draw conclusions.

The quality of teaching

The quality of teaching and learning is improving well. Inadequate practice has been eradicated. There are more lessons where good learning is evident. With greater confidence in their own ability teachers are beginning to plan more exciting and practical activities that relate well to pupils' interests and abilities.

When the planning and teaching are most effective, pupils are enthusiastic and absorbed in their learning. For example, pupils in Years 3 and 4 made good progress in their ability to describe a mythical creature by acting out scenes in costume and discussing and sharing their ideas with each other in groups. This type of lesson confirmed how well pupils can be motivated when the teaching is engaging and imaginative.

Where teaching is less strong, work is not demanding enough for pupils of higher ability. Opportunities are missed to engage pupils fully in developing their thinking skills, which restricts their ability to make decisions about how they learn and direct their own activities. In addition, in some lessons there is an imbalance between time and activity. For example, too much time spent drawing and constructing tables with rows and columns limits the time available for pupils to achieve the aims of the lesson.

Great strides have been made in improving the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Staff have completely transformed both the Nursery and Reception classrooms. Consequently, the indoor environment is much better planned and resourced and now supports learning well.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

In the main pupils have positive attitudes to their work and are keen to succeed. Their attendance continues to improve. They enjoy coming to school and feel safe and secure. When asked to express their views about how they see things there was clear agreement that their lessons are getting better and that the school is improving: 'Our lessons are more fun now. '; 'We get to do more interesting things. '; 'The teachers go through things a lot more now. '; and 'Behaviour in class is much better.' were typical of their comments. Pupils are also aware that they are making faster and more consistent progress than before. Part of the reason for this is that pupils are now more in tune with the success criteria for different pieces of work in lessons. This is helping to improve their understanding of their work and how their efforts can be improved.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

Senior leaders continue to have a pivotal role in accelerating improvement, in orchestrating the school's steady recovery and in developing the capacity of staff at all levels. The school has turned the corner, everyone is stepping up to the mark and there is a strong momentum for improving the school. Expectations have been raised and staff are learning from one another with a strong emphasis on coaching and professional development. As a group they can now see light at the end of the tunnel as the rewards for their hard work are becoming more apparent.

Middle leadership has strengthened further. Staff have enhanced their skills in monitoring and evaluating their areas of responsibility through checking on pupils' work, analysing data and tracking pupils' progress. As a result they are now more confident to make judgements on the quality of teaching and pinpoint with accuracy the progress of different groups, including the more able and those pupils eligible for support through the pupil premium.

The work of governors remains focused and supportive. Members of the governing body

continue to deepen their knowledge of the school's performance through scrutinising information on pupils' progress and in analysing data. They are aware of the school's most pressing priorities and where further improvements can be made.

The school is edging closer to the finishing line and everything is coming together well for the target date for removal of special measures in the forthcoming summer term. Senior leaders are well aware that this will depend on the school's ability to demonstrate convincingly to inspectors at the next monitoring inspection that it meets the needs of all learners and has the capacity for sustained improvement from leaders and managers at all levels.

External support

The support from the local authority continues to be effective and proportionate to the needs of the school. This work is proving to be beneficial in building the confidence of staff and in improving provision. The time given by local authority officers is reducing as the school's ability to manage and direct its own improvement have strengthened over time.

Priorities for further improvement

- Increase the level of challenge for the more able pupils, particularly in mathematics.