

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

Direct T 01695 566932

Direct F 01695 729320

Direct email: hcarnall@cfbt.com



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Mrs Samantha Laycock
Headteacher
Hightown Junior, Infant and Nursery School
Hightown Road
Liversedge
West Yorkshire
WF15 8BL

Dear Mrs Laycock

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Hightown Junior, Infant and Nursery School, Kirklees

Following my visit to your school on 27 March 2014, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report on 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 December 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:

- bring greater urgency to developing the role of the governing body and their understanding of effective governance
- ensure the new leadership arrangements in the school build on the improvements already seen since the recent inspection and maintain the momentum that has been established
- make sure the school improvement plan includes greater detail about future developments and includes targets for more able pupils and those that can make better than expected progress.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with the acting headteacher and senior leaders, a group of pupils and a representative of the local authority. I held a conversation

with the chair of the Governing Body. I evaluated a range of documentation including: the school improvement plan; the tracking of pupils' progress; monitoring reports and some pupils' books. In addition you took me on a tour of the school to look briefly at teaching and learning and the changes made to provision since the inspection.

Context

Since the last inspection the headteacher has retired and an acting headteacher from an outstanding school has led in an interim capacity. A new headteacher has been appointed and will take up post after Easter 2014.

Main findings

You and your staff have responded very positively to the areas for improvement from the previous inspection. You have worked with urgency, taking a range of appropriate actions to lay the foundations for improvements in the consistency and quality of teaching and learning across the school. You have quickly established a culture in the school where staff feel they are well supported, they are better able to support each other and have a better shared understanding of what needs to improve. Actions so far taken include:

- ensuring that pupils are more aware of their targets and the levels they have achieved
- ensuring effective practice is understood and becomes embedded in lessons
- developing a shared understanding of what effective teaching and learning looks like in lessons
- a focus on driving up attendance
- ensuring behaviours that support effective learning are promoted and underpin teachers' planning and classroom delivery.

Pupils now view learning as more challenging and lessons as more engaging. They have a better understanding of what they need to do next to improve their own learning. As a result, pupils' progress is accelerating and attendance is beginning to improve.

There are now regular reviews of how well pupils are achieving and staff are held to account for the progress of their pupils. Robust systems to check on the quality of teaching and learning are in place which means that the school is better placed to plan appropriate support for pupils and share best practice between teachers.

The school action plan addresses the areas that need improvement and has rightly prioritised actions linked to improving teaching and learning. It gives a clear overview of proposed actions. The impact of some of the actions taken cannot be fully measured because appropriately challenging milestones are not in the plan. The school recognises the need to provide more detail within the plan for their next phase of development. This needs to be addressed urgently by the incoming

headteacher so that governors can accurately assess how well the school is improving over time.

Governors are knowledgeable about the actions currently being undertaken by you and your staff. Governors now have an accurate view of what the strengths and areas for improvement in the school are and what the school needs to do to improve. A new committee structure is in place to improve the ability of governors to review the progress the school is making in a more timely fashion. A skills audit is underway but the plans for their own improvement are not yet fully developed. Improvements in this aspect must keep pace with the developments elsewhere in the school to help the school move forward rapidly.

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 provided effective support by helping to secure a leadership presence at the school since the previous inspection. Productive links are being forged with your own school so that staff have, and will continue to have opportunities to work alongside highly skilled classroom practitioners to help them develop their teaching skills.

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

Yours sincerely

Jonathan Brown
Her Majesty's Inspector