

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](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

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



25 March 2014

Mrs Karen Hardman  
Headteacher  
Accrington St Mary Magdalen's Church of England Primary School  
Devonshire Street  
Accrington  
Lancashire  
BB5 1DW

Dear Mrs Hardman

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Accrington St Mary Magdalen's Church of England Primary School, Lancashire**

Following my visit to your school on 24 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:

- further sharpen the school improvement plan by setting dates when actions are to be completed.
- Ensure that teachers' marking enhances pupils' learning by:
  - requiring pupils to respond to comments in their books and checking that this has been done
  - consistently expecting the highest standards of presentation.

### **Evidence**

Meetings were held with you, subject leaders for English and mathematics, pupils, the Chair of governors together with three other governors, and a representative of the local authority. Documents, including the school's improvement plan, were evaluated. Samples of pupils' work from Years 2, 5 and 6 were reviewed. Classrooms were visited, accompanied by the headteacher.

## **Context**

There is a new teacher in Year 4. A parent governor has resigned and a new parent governor appointed.

## **Main findings**

Leadership and management are improving Senior leaders and governors responded to the inspection findings by sharpening the school improvement plan. They now check more rigorously that actions have the planned impact. The school improvement plan has provided a secure framework for recent rapid development. However, more detail is needed to confirm when different actions are to be completed to support further progress.

Changes to middle leadership are about to be implemented. Small teams of staff from different years will work together each week to ensure that effective practice is shared. Current school data shows that pupils are making faster progress and this is leading to raised attainment.

The quality of teaching is improving Senior leaders' checks on teaching are tighter. All teaching seen in the most recent review by senior leaders was at least good. Interviews between senior leaders and pupils are used to provide feedback on learning and teaching. There are plans to involve governors in these meetings in the future. The work of the new teacher and teaching assistant in Year 4 is effective. Teachers work closely with teaching assistants to ensure that different groups of pupils are well supported at all stages in lessons.

Marking remains inconsistent. Teachers' comments often confirm that work has been completed and sometimes suggest further tasks to add to pupils' learning. However, pupils' responses to these are not always checked. Some work is poorly presented and teachers do not always comment on this. Senior leaders are aware that marking requires further improvement and have agreed that a consultant from the local authority should work with teachers to ensure that this happens.

The deputy headteacher took up responsibility for leading mathematics shortly before the recent section 5 inspection. She has continued to work with teachers to improve mathematics. School records show that learning in mathematics is starting to improve. More mathematics is being taught in other subjects. For example, additional funding has been used to provide physical education activities which also develop mathematical skills.

The new system to track pupils' achievement gives leaders and teachers more accurate information on pupils' progress. Training has been provided to ensure that teachers are confident to use the system. Meetings between senior leaders and class teachers check how well pupils are doing. They are more effective because they are more frequent and based on the better data.

Governors are providing more challenge to senior leaders. The Standards and Effectiveness Committee of the Governing Body's checks on the school's progress are having greater impact because its meetings are more frequent and benefit from the advice of a representative of the local authority. Governors are more demanding of the information they require. For example, they have asked for data on pupils' achievement to be provided in a clearer way.

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**

While the local authority has reduced its level of support, its work with the school continues to be effective. Consultants are offering training and support that matches the planned improvements. This support has contributed to improvement, such as in teaching assistants' practice. Subject leaders are using documents provided by the local authority to assist in planning the curriculum for English and mathematics. The local authority has brokered a link with a local, more effective school. This has led to improvement in mathematics practice at St Mary Magdalen's.

The diocese has provided funding towards building improvements and has contributed to a new framework for teaching religious education.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Lancashire and the Director of Education for the Blackburn Diocese of the Church of England.

Yours sincerely

David Selby

**Her Majesty's Inspector**