

CfBT Inspection Services
Suite 22

West Lancs Investment Centre
Maple View
Skelmersdale
WN8 9TG

T 0300 123 1231

Text Phone: 0161 6188524
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk

Direct T 01695 566855

Direct F 01695 729320

Direct email: gail.hill@cfbt.com



7 April 2014

Mrs Yvonne Buckley
Headteacher
Willow Primary School
Alston Road
Doncaster
South Yorkshire
DN4 7EZ

Dear Mrs Buckley

Special measures monitoring inspection of Willow Primary School Academy

Following my visit with Rosemary Eaton Additional Inspector and Allison Chin Associate Inspector to the academy on 3 and 4 April 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 academy became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in April 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 academy is making reasonable progress towards the removal of special measures.

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 Director of Children's Services for Doncaster.

Yours sincerely

Amraz Ali
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Improve the quality of teaching across the school so it is good or better in order that pupils make at least good progress and reach the standards of which they are capable of particularly in English and mathematics by:
 - ensuring that teachers take account of what pupils already know when planning lessons in order to match work closely to the full range of pupils' learning needs
 - taking steps to help all groups of pupils make the progress of which they are capable and achieve equally well, particularly pupils with special educational needs
 - making sure that teachers always have high expectations of what pupils can achieve, including standards of presentation, spelling and handwriting
 - modifying the curriculum so that it enables all pupils to achieve well
 - making sure that pupils' books are always marked thoroughly and that marking provides pupils with clear feedback about how well they are doing and what they need to do next.

- Urgently improve the effectiveness of leadership and management at all levels, including governance, by:
 - taking swift action to eradicate inadequate teaching
 - developing an effective system of self-evaluation so that it is realistic, robust, and accurate in focusing on what the school is good at and what areas need developing
 - establishing rigorous systems for checking pupils' progress
 - ensuring leaders and managers know how to review and analyse information about pupils' progress and use it to check whether their actions are helping to improve pupils' achievement
 - making certain that when leaders observe lessons they focus on the progress pupils are making as well as what the teacher is doing
 - improving the effectiveness of the methods used to communicate with parents
 - undertaking an external review of the governing body in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management could be improved.

- Improve the behaviour of a small number of pupils who behave boisterously at break times by teaching them how to play purposefully and understand the consequences of their actions.

Report on the third monitoring inspection on 3 to 4 April 2014

Evidence

Inspectors visited 18 lessons and observed daily routines, including start-of-day activities, break times and lunchtimes. Inspectors scrutinised documents, including the academy's plans for improvement, the evaluations of teaching, the evaluations from work scrutiny and the academy's records of pupils' attainment. Meetings were held with the headteacher, staff, groups of pupils, a representative from the local authority, three members of the governing body and a telephone interview was conducted with the Chair of the Governing Body. Work in pupils' books from across the academy was scrutinised and inspectors talked to parents as they collected their children at the end of the school day.

Context

Since the last inspection there have been a number of changes to the academy's context. One teacher is on maternity leave and another teacher returned from maternity leave to share a class with a newly recruited part-time teacher. A teacher and a mid-day supervisor are absent due to sickness. A higher-level teaching assistant has returned from a long-term sickness absence, but was absent during the inspection. Additionally, on the days of the inspection, two teachers were absent due to sickness and their classes were covered by supply teachers.

Achievement of pupils at the school

Pupils' learning and progress in lessons across the academy are generally improving but remain inconsistent in some classes and subjects. The academy's tracking of attainment demonstrates that progress over time is improving but is still variable, with the greatest progress reflecting the best teaching. However, there remains a small core of pupils whose progress is limited and this tends to relate directly to classes and subjects where the quality of teaching is less secure. Although the rates of progress of pupils supported by the pupil premium are generally improving, a significant concern is the gaps in attainment that exists across the academy. In some year groups those supported by the pupil premium are two terms behind those not supported by the pupil premium. The attainment of those pupils who are identified as having disabilities and/or special educational needs is also improving, partly because of the extra help they have from teaching assistants, but this remains variable. The accuracy of assessments, particularly in writing, has improved and teachers are beginning to have greater confidence in the assessments undertaken by their colleagues. Although improving, across the academy both progress and attainment in writing and mathematics remain most variable, whereas progress and attainment in reading is a relative strength. Across the academy pupils' written work

has improved in terms of quantity and quality but there remains a core of pupils whose work continues to be untidy, poorly presented and typified by poor handwriting.

The quality of teaching

Improvements to the quality of teaching are evident so that more good teaching was observed and, where teaching still requires improvement, more good features were visible. This is having a positive impact on learning and progress over time, for example, there is a clear impact on the quality and quantity of written work recorded in books. However, some teaching remains weak and too much still requires improvement. Teachers are using the new planning formats for literacy and numeracy better and, as a consequence, they are trying to match tasks to the different ability groups within their classes but with different degrees of success. For example, in a Year 1 mathematics lesson one group of pupils worked with a set of digital scales to weigh objects, while another group used a balance to compare weights and a third group were comparing weights by lifting and ordering objects. However, on other occasions tasks are not set at just the right level and some pupils find them too easy and undemanding while others find them too difficult. There is some evidence of teachers' increased expectations. For example, in a Reception class children were expected to make three digit numbers and read these aloud, and order several of these numbers. However, this is not always the case and sometimes it is not made clear to pupils what is expected of them in terms of quality or quantity. Consequently, in one lesson a group of the most able pupils wrote only one simple sentence while other pupils wrote one or two elaborate paragraphs.

The use of teaching assistants has improved, particularly where they are working with pupils supported by the pupil premium. However, this remains variable and some teaching assistants do not always understand the intended learning and instead focus on helping pupils to record the correct answer without pupils understanding how to work it out for themselves. The quality of teachers' marking has improved and pupils are beginning to undertake corrections to their work, for example, by correcting spellings or grammar. However, the impact of this is inconsistent and some pupils do not make corrections or the corrections they make are also incorrect. A particular issue has been the induction of new or temporary teachers who have not always followed the academy's marking policy. Consequently, although their marking is diligent it has not brought about improvements to pupils' work or learning over time.

The new planning format for literacy and numeracy is helping to improve planning for some of these lessons. Routinely teachers identify those pupils who are learning English as an additional language, those with particular special educational needs and those supported through the pupil premium. However, this information is not always used to modify teachers' instructions or to tailor questions appropriately. Additionally, some lessons other than literacy and numeracy are not well planned

and, consequently, tasks are not well thought out, time is not used well and learning is not as strong.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Observations of break times and lunchtimes, along with discussions with pupils, indicate that behaviour at these important times is improving. A particularly positive development has been in providing additional playground space for Key Stage 1 pupils and Reception children. As a consequence, pupils and staff state that the incidence of pupils bumping into one another and falling over has reduced. Pupils say they enjoy the games that adults encourage them to play on the new playground. Pupils say they enjoy using the playtime equipment, such as hoops, balls and ropes, and this adds to their enjoyment of break times and lunchtimes. However, on the days of the inspection access to the play equipment had been denied in response to a misdemeanour by a small group of pupils earlier in the week. Pupils thought this was unfair and inspectors noted that it was counterproductive to punish all pupils for the misbehaviour of a few as it left many with nothing to engage them. In classrooms, behaviour is generally good. Typically, pupils are well behaved and enthusiastic in lessons and it is only when they are kept stationary for too long that their engagement wanes. Attendance is improving and for the year to date is back up to levels that were typical for the academy before it declined in 2012.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

Since the last monitoring inspection the quality of teaching has improved and achievement across the academy is improving. Teachers say that morale and teamwork are improving. However, senior leaders are accurate in their evaluation that more still needs to be done if the academy is to exit special measures successfully, for example, they are clear about the need to improve teaching where it is weak. Performance management is being used well to hold staff to account for the progress of pupils. Where the greatest improvement is needed individual teachers have bespoke support plans, which use expertise from within the academy and from other better performing schools through the Doncaster Teaching Schools Partnership. Staff state they value this support and it is helping to improve their teaching, and inspection evidence confirms this support is helping to improve teaching. Improvements to the accuracy and rigor of assessments and tracking show where achievement is improving and identifies the pupils and particular groups of pupils who are not making expected or better progress.

Senior leaders responded well to the recently completed wellness survey and have changed their approach to supporting individual staff and introduced an open-door policy for dealing with staff concerns. Although the work of middle leaders continues to require improvement, of note is the work of the assessment coordinator who has led the improvements to secure better accuracy of assessments, particularly in

writing. Parents who spoke to inspectors were supportive of the academy and confirmed that improvements are being made, particularly to pupils' behaviour. They welcome the opportunity to read with their children at the start of each day. However, a small number of parents stated they would welcome more information about the impact of improvements across the academy.

Staffing remains a particular challenge for the academy, with two on-going absences, maternity leaves, retirements and resignations. As a consequence, although there has been much staff training, not all of the staff employed have been brought up to speed quickly about the academy's expectations and policies, such as the approach to marking. An effective induction will be particularly important if the academy successfully recruits two more senior members of staff.

External support

Following the first monitoring visit by Her Majesty's Inspector senior leaders engaged well with the local authority and the local authority officer agreed to attend the half-termly improvement group meetings in order to provide some external challenge. However, it is disappointing that there has not been any external challenge at all subsequent meetings of this group. The academy has continued to receive some good support from the Doncaster Teaching Schools Partnership which is helping to improve teaching.