

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 566863
Direct F 01695 729320
Direct email:
jbennett@cfbt.com



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Mrs Linda Speed
Headteacher
Longton Lane Community Primary School
Longton Lane
Rainhill
Prescot
Merseyside
L35 8PB

Dear Mrs Speed

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Longton Lane Community Primary School, St. Helens

Following my visit to your school on 30 April 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 third monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in March 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:

- continue to focus on improving pupils' learning and accelerate their progress in reading, writing and mathematics
- organise an external review of the governing body to equip members further with skills to support and challenge the school.

Evidence:

During the visit, I held meetings with you, a group of three governors, a representative of the local authority and a group of Year 6 pupils to discuss the action taken since the last inspection and my previous visit. We made a tour of the school and I sampled some lessons. I looked at the school's most recent information on pupils' progress and attendance.

Context:

Since my last visit a deputy headteacher has joined the school on a temporary basis so that you continue to lead the school for two and a half days per week and he leads the school for the remaining part of the week. Two new governors have been appointed to the governing body and there is one vacancy. Two teachers are absent with illness and Year 1 and Year 2 are covered by supply teachers.

Main findings:

You and the seconded deputy headteacher are successfully building on the foundations established at my last visit. New systems introduced for the start of the day mean that pupils start learning as soon as they enter their classes. Likewise through reviewing the timetable so that break times and lunch times are shorter, pupils have more time to learn. As a result, lateness has decreased and pupils start the day calm and ready to learn. Pupils spoken to were happy about these changes as they want to learn. Similarly, parents I spoke to appreciate the benefits of taking their children into class rather than leaving them on the playground.

Improving the quality of teaching remains at the centre of all planned action to move the school forward. You have reviewed teachers' targets so that they more closely link to the progress pupils make in their class. You have held meetings with each teacher and teaching assistant to check the progress pupils are making and identify which pupils need extra help. This has included discussions about how to use the information collected on pupil progress more effectively. Consequently, staff are more responsible for making sure pupils make better progress over the time they spend in each class. Training for all staff, including teaching assistants, has increased their confidence and competence in key aspects of practice such as questioning techniques and planning learning activities for pupils with different abilities. Teachers have visited partner schools to observe good learning in lessons and are starting to introduce those ideas in their classes. You give teachers clear points for development after lesson observations and provide training and support to help them improve. Your records show that the quality of teaching is getting better.

Subject leaders are starting to be more involved in leading their subjects and through your modelling of good practice in this aspect they are taking on more responsibility for pupils' progress. However, this is not the case for all subject leaders.

You are confident that the assessment information collected at the half term point in February is accurate and are using this as a basis from which to plot progress for all pupils in reading, writing and mathematics. You check on the quality of teaching by using assessment information, watching teachers teach, looking at pupils' workbooks and talking to pupils. As a result you consider that pupils are making progress in lessons which is starting to be reflected in pupils' workbooks.

The most recent assessment information shows that pupils are making progress although some groups of pupils, namely the pupils eligible for pupil premium, are making less progress than their peers. Nevertheless, notable improvements in the atmosphere around the school, the team spirit you have created, the longer learning time and the better quality of teaching bode well for faster progress so that pupils can make up for earlier lost ground. A small group of governors meet monthly to check on the progress of the school and the effectiveness of planned action. Governors have held interviews for a new headteacher but decided not to appoint; there are plans to start the recruitment process again very shortly. As two new members have joined the governing body and there is one vacancy, it is timely for the governors to organise an external review of their work so they are best placed to support and challenge the school further.

External support

The local authority organised for a deputy headteacher from a good school to join the school on a temporary basis. The local authority link officer continues to visit the school regularly; and the English adviser and teaching school continue to provide support in English and mathematics. The local authority conducted a review of the school through observations of lessons and in depth scrutiny of writing and mathematics books.

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

Yours sincerely

Eileen Mulgrew

Her Majesty's Inspector