

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 566933
Direct F 01695 729320
Direct email:
ggleaden@cfbt.com



16 May 2014

Mrs Barbara Key
Executive Headteacher
Milburn School
Milburn
Penrith
Cumbria
CA10 1TN

Dear Mrs Key

Special measures monitoring inspection of Milburn School

Following my visit to your school on 15 May 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 recent section 5 inspection.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in January 2014.

Evidence

During this inspection, meetings were held with the executive headteacher, the Chair of the Governing Body and four further governors and a representative of the local authority. In addition, a brief telephone discussion was held with a senior adviser from the local authority and the views of three parents were taken into account. Informal discussions with the four pupils present on the day of the inspection took place over lunch. The local authority's statement of action and the school's improvement plan were evaluated.

Context

The school currently has only five pupils. There has been no headteacher in post since September 2013 and the school is managed by an executive headteacher from a nearby primary school. This arrangement was formally agreed from Sept 2013 and was due to end Sept 2014. However, a new executive head teacher has now been designated with increased leadership and management time and will commence June 2014. There are no other leaders in the school. Two supply teachers continue to cover classes because of the long-term absence of both substantive post holders whose return remains uncertain. There are no changes to the governing body.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

Governors and the local authority recognise and understand why the school was judged to need special measures. Currently, the five pupils on the school roll are happy and well cared for. A degree of stability has been introduced to their learning and the very small numbers in each class mean that they benefit from individual support. They enjoy visiting their partner school where they are taught some subjects, such as physical education and modern foreign languages, because the partner school is better placed and equipped to deliver these aspects of the curriculum. Pupils' personal and social development is less secure, since they have very limited opportunities to socialise and learn with a wider range of pupils, including those of their own age.

Little further can be achieved until the immediate future of the school and staffing is clarified. It is imperative that a decision is made quickly regarding the viability of the school. If the school is to remain open, the long-drawn-out staffing issues need to be resolved as a matter of priority to enable improvements to take place.

As it stands, the local authority statement of action is not appropriate since it does not meet the immediate and unique needs of the school and is based on the assumption that the school is facing normal circumstances. This is not the case, since all staff are temporary and any investment in training and support is not cost effective and may not benefit the school in the long term. The plan lacks specific detail and, given the current circumstances, any milestones for improvement are unrealistic. As a result, the greater majority of issues identified during the inspection are not being tackled with sufficient rigour or urgency. Currently, there is no coherent school action plan in place, as it is incomplete. Capacity to sustain any improvement is also limited by the uncertainties that prevail about the school's future and the complete lack of any permanent staff.

The local authority has ensured continuity in their education for the five remaining pupils in the school through brokered support from an executive headteacher from a nearby school. This is expedient in the short term, however, in the long term, this is an unsatisfactory arrangement and it is unsustainable.

Safeguarding policies are in place, but the recording requirements, including checks on adults with access to pupils, are incomplete, not up to date and, as a result, are insecure.

Before any real progress can be made, the future of the school needs to be clarified, staffing issues need to be resolved and safeguarding arrangements need to meet requirements.

Following the monitoring inspection the following judgements were made:

The local authority's statement of action is not fit for purpose as it currently does not meet the very specific requirements of this school.

The school's improvement plan is incomplete and currently is not fit for purpose.

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

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Governing Body and the Acting Corporate Director of Children's Services for Cumbria. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Leszek Iwaskow

Her Majesty's Inspector