

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 566868
Direct F 01695 729320
Direct email:
pnuttie@cfbt.com



6 June 2014

Miss Pam Keen
Headteacher
Priory CofE Primary School
Jubilee Road
Trentham
Stoke-on-Trent
Staffordshire
ST4 8EF

Dear Miss Keen

Special measures monitoring inspection of Priory CofE Primary School

Following my visit, with Mary Liptrot, Additional Inspector, to your school on 4 and 5 June 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 fourth monitoring inspection since the school 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 school is making reasonable progress towards the removal of special measures.

The school may appoint one newly qualified teacher if guidance and support is provided by a senior leader whose quality of teaching is consistently good or better.

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 Stoke-On-Trent.

Yours sincerely

Marilyn Mottram
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is good or better, particularly in Years 3 and 4, by ensuring that:
 - teachers provide work that closely matches pupils' different needs and abilities so that pupils are effectively challenged and supported in lessons
 - pupils are actively involved in their learning during lessons
 - children in the Early Years Foundation Stage have more frequent access to the outdoor area and that it is planned for and is as stimulating as the indoor classrooms
 - teaching assistants are fully involved in all parts of lessons to support pupils' learning
 - teachers' marking helps pupils to improve their work and pupils are provided with the time they need to respond to their teacher's comments
 - teachers have the opportunity to observe good and better teaching within and beyond the school.

- Accelerate progress, particularly in Years 3 and 4 and raise standards in writing and mathematics, so that an above-average proportion of pupils reaches the expected levels of attainment by the end of Year 6 by:
 - providing more purposeful opportunities for pupils to practise their writing and write at length in different subjects
 - ensuring that pupils have a secure understanding of basic mathematical skills before going onto more advanced concepts.

- Improve the effectiveness of staff in preventing and dealing with bullying so that pupils' confidence in reporting incidents of bullying grows.

- Improve the impact and effectiveness of leadership and management, including governance, by:
 - developing the skills of all subject and senior leaders so they use data to assess pupils' performance accurately; and use this information to inform their action plans, in order to improve the quality of teaching and raise pupils' achievement in their subjects
 - ensuring that all members of the governing body have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities so that they can effectively drive the school forward and hold leaders to account.

An external review of governance should be undertaken to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

Report on the fourth monitoring inspection on 4 to 5 June 2014.

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documentation and met with the headteacher and other senior leaders. Inspectors also met with the Chair of the Interim Executive Board of Governors (IEB) and two other governors, a group of pupils, and a representative from the local authority. At the start of the second day of this monitoring inspection, inspectors met with a group of parents and took account of correspondence from parents and carers and 91 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View). In addition to this, inspectors looked at pupils' workbooks. Nine of the 18 lessons seen by inspectors were jointly observed with senior leaders.

Context

Since the previous monitoring inspection, four teachers have left and four teachers have joined the school. One governor has resigned but continues to support the school in a consultancy capacity.

Achievement of pupils at the school

Actions to raise attainment in writing and mathematics are proving to be successful. Work in pupils' books confirms that more pupils across the school are working at the levels expected for their age. The school's records show that an above average proportion of pupils are expected to reach the expected levels of attainment in writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.

In many classes, pupils' increased confidence and engagement in their learning means that they are willing to accept a challenge and attempt work that is harder than their current level of attainment. This means that the proportion of pupils working at levels higher than those expected for their age in writing and mathematics has increased, particularly in Years 2, 5 and 6. These improvements are not yet consistent in every class or in every subject.

Teachers are getting better at planning writing opportunities that are relevant to pupils' interests. There is a greater emphasis on setting learning targets with pupils to improve their spelling, punctuation and grammar skills. Teachers are checking more closely that pupils are meeting their targets when completing longer pieces of work. Although this new approach is not yet fully established in every class, work in pupils' books shows that more pupils are making good progress in writing than previously.

In mathematics, teachers are planning more opportunities for pupils to use their mathematical skills to explore ideas and solve problems. For example, during the inspection, pupils were planning to collect and interpret data during a trip to a zoo. As a consequence of these sorts of activities, pupils are enthusiastic about mathematics and more pupils are making good progress.

Although pupils' progress has improved, the progress for different groups of pupils remains variable in writing and mathematics. For example, the school's records show that pupils who are supported by the pupil premium funding are not making good progress in writing in Years 1 and 3. The progress made by disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is improving but is not yet good. The teacher responsible for managing this area has introduced robust systems for checking that these pupils are receiving the additional and appropriate support that they need. Teachers are getting better at planning activities that match these pupils' learning needs. However, the full impact of this work on pupils' achievement is yet to be seen.

The quality of teaching

Teaching continues to improve. Teachers are making effective use of the support they are receiving from training programmes. They value the opportunities to work with each other and with personal coaches to improve the impact of their teaching on pupils' achievement. Visits to classrooms and a review of work in pupils' books confirm that teaching is getting better. There is an atmosphere of professional learning among the staff and morale is high. However, the quality of teaching is not yet consistently high enough.

Where teaching is strongest, work closely matches pupils' different abilities and teachers give pupils the chance to challenge themselves by choosing harder work when they feel confident. Teachers and teaching assistants use questioning effectively, for example to confirm pupils' understanding of basic mathematical skills and adapt tasks if necessary to move pupils' learning forward quickly.

In mathematics, teachers were quick to spot which pupils had mastered the concept of probability and which pupils needed to secure their understanding before moving on to more advanced challenges. Pupils were working together effectively and were aware of their own learning needs. Pupils' comments include, 'I understand how to express probability as a sum, like a fraction or a percentage, but I need help with using the language of probability.' All pupils were using target cards and sheets to record their learning straight away. This was a powerful motivator. Pupils were eager to secure their understanding and move to the next challenge.

Where teaching is weaker teachers do not always take the opportunity to ask pupils a follow-up question or push them to provide further explanations for their answers. This limits pupils' progress. There are occasions when all pupils are working on the same task and teachers' expectations are not high enough. Some pupils find tasks too easy and they are not given the chance to challenge themselves or apply their knowledge and skills to different situations. This limits pupils' progress.

The new approach to teaching writing is helping teachers to set more precise and relevant targets to help pupils to improve their writing. Recent work shows that more pupils are responding to their teachers' comments and improving their writing. However, there are still examples of teachers' marking which gives praise for effort but does not indicate clearly enough what pupils should try to do next, particularly in writing.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Parents that spoke to inspectors were extremely positive about the school. They expressed their confidence in the headteacher with comments such as; 'She is turning the school around. She has good support from the deputy headteacher. She puts the children first and is passionate about improving the school.'

Parents feel that behaviour continues to improve. They say that the 'Rights Respecting Squad' provides their children with another set of people to talk to if they are worried about anything. One parent said, 'I trust the school; each child is treated as an individual and any problems are dealt with.' This echoes the comments made by parents and pupils during the previous monitoring inspection. The school's records and logs show a reduction in the number of minor incidents during playtimes and lunchtimes. Older pupils say that there are arguments at times particularly over games of football. They are aware that more equipment has been purchased to provide them with a wider range of outdoor games and activities. Older pupils feel that this is necessary.

A minority of parents remain dissatisfied with the improvements that are being made. Senior leaders are continuing to work to improve communications with all parents and carers. The headteacher and the Chair of the Interim Board have established a fortnightly 'surgery' so that parents can meet with either one or both of them. They are ensuring that they are available to speak with parents and carers, and make clear the timescales and processes for resolving any concerns and working together to support pupils.

School leaders continue to improve attendance and punctuality. Pupils understand the importance of attending school on time. They want to achieve class rewards for good attendance and feel a sense of responsibility towards their classmates to do this.

The school's systems for checking the attendance of different groups of pupils are not yet sufficiently robust. Some groups of pupils miss more sessions than others. For example, pupils who are known to be eligible for pupil premium funding miss more sessions than their classmates. The impact of this on pupils' achievement is not checked carefully enough.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

Following the previous monitoring inspection, the headteacher, in partnership with the IEB and the local authority, took decisive action and made suitable changes to the professional development support on offer to teachers and teaching assistants. They organised relevant training and support for individual teachers, including frequent coaching sessions where necessary. Pupils' work and the school's records show that these initiatives are having an impact on pupils' achievement. Teachers and teaching assistants say that they are rapidly improving their subject knowledge and their practice. This is confirmed by the impact teaching has had on speeding up pupils' progress.

Teachers and teaching assistants are receiving specialist guidance to ensure that pupils who find learning more difficult or those with special educational needs get the additional support that they need. Teachers are learning from outstanding teachers in specialist settings. This is a positive and recent development since the previous monitoring inspection. The full impact of this work on the achievement of this group of pupils is yet to be seen.

Senior leaders and subject leaders carefully check and analyse the information related to the progress of individual pupils. They are using this information to inform their action plans and raise the quality of teaching. However, they are not checking closely the impact of actions on different groups of pupils. As a result, leaders are not clear about which programmes are having the most impact on pupils' achievement.

The IEB is strong and effective. The members are relentless in their commitment to the school. They have high expectations of the school's leaders and keep a close eye on the progress the school is making towards removal of special measures. They have supported the headteacher through a challenging time. It is to their credit that they have not allowed the changes to the support programmes on offer to teachers to detract them from continuing to drive improvements.

External support

The local authority responded swiftly to the recommendations in the previous monitoring inspection report. Effective programmes of support to further improve the quality of teaching were introduced immediately. The target dates for the removal of the school from special measures have been adjusted accordingly. The local authority is working with school leaders to ensure that the school is able to meet the new deadlines.