

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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Miss Paula Skelly
Headteacher
Moor Row Community Primary School
Moor Row
Cumbria
CA24 3JW

Dear Miss Skelly

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Moor Row Community Primary School, Cumbria

Following my visit to your school on 18 June 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 March 2014. 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:

- ensure that Year 1/2 receive the best possible teaching from September 2014
- undertake an external review of governance
- sharpen the school action plan so it is clear who is responsible for leading, monitoring and evaluating the various actions, and includes every aspect of the areas for improvement identified in the recent inspection report.

Evidence

During the visit, I met with you and a temporary senior leader, the Chair and one other member of the Governing Body, a representative from the local authority and two groups of pupils. I evaluated the school action plan and scrutinised other key documentation. I also had the opportunity to accompany you on a tour of the school.

Main findings

You acknowledge that the recent inspection judgement was an accurate reflection of your school and you have used it as a catalyst for a renewed focus on improvement. Your action plan focuses on the areas for improvement which were highlighted in the inspection report but needs to include specific details on how you are going to ensure that those pupils supported by the pupil premium and the most able make the best possible progress. The plan gives a detailed account of actions, but it is not always clear who is responsible for leading, monitoring and evaluating the impact of these specific actions. You have shared the plan with all staff and encouraged them to contribute their ideas. All staff review the progress made at the weekly staff meeting and this collaborative approach means they are all on board for this journey of improvement.

You took swift and incisive action to tackle the issue of the quality of teaching in Year 1/2, which was highlighted in the recent inspection report as not consistently good. Where staff absence has occurred you have ensured that pupils are still being taught well, either through re-organising the responsibilities of existing teachers or securing strong supply staff. It is vitally important that when pupils move from Early Years Foundation Stage to Key Stage 1, they are given the best possible opportunity to move their learning on at a fast pace. You have a very strong practitioner in school and we discussed the reasons why she should take on responsibility for this key group of pupils from September.

Staff are now more confident about using the new system for tracking pupils' progress. Following the half-termly collection of data, you have held pupil progress meetings with the teachers of Year 2 and 6. The notes from these meetings show how specific actions are planned to help individual pupils improve their progress and the clear success criteria enable you to evaluate the impact of these actions. From September these meetings will take place for all year groups.

You have taken a range of actions to improve pupils' progress in reading and writing, which have had particular impact with Year 6. The number of pupils attaining above level 4b and 5 is set to improve significantly on last year. There will also be a significant improvement in writing attainment in Year 2. Both Key Stage 1 and 2 pupils told me how much they enjoy the Wednesday morning reading partners activity. The actions you have taken to improve standards in the phonics screening check have had impact. Current Year 1 pupils have done better in the test this year compared to the last two years.

The new marking policy sets out clear expectations and you carry out marking scrutinies to check that teachers are following these. My scrutiny of pupils' books revealed that not all teachers are setting appropriate improvement targets and when follow-up tasks are set, they are not always done. Opportunities are missed to set extra challenge tasks for pupils, particularly in mathematics

Recent new appointments to the governing body have strengthened its capability and capacity. One of these new governors has used her expertise to support you with the action plan and marking policy. However, the existing committee structure does not give a high enough priority to standards and achievement and governors are not being effective enough in carrying out their main role of challenging the school on its performance. They accept that an external review of governance will help them to become more effective.

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

You would have welcomed more support from the local authority when you were appointed as headteacher. However, since the inspection, this support has been much more in evidence. Since March, the local authority advisor has made weekly visits to the school and delivered training to the staff. He has brokered peer support from two other schools, with whom you now work in a triad. You have found this particularly beneficial and the work done with these schools on such things as assessment and phonics has contributed to the improvements in pupils' progress.

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

Yours sincerely

Anne Seneviratne

Her Majesty's Inspector