

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 566850
Direct F 01695 729320
Direct email:
dmccarrick@cfbt.com



3 July 2014

Miss J Sanderson
Headteacher
Blackburn Primary School
Baring Road
Blackburn
Rotherham
South Yorkshire
S61 2BU

Dear Miss Sanderson

Special measures monitoring inspection of Blackburn Primary School

Following my visit with Bernard Campbell Her Majesty's Inspector to your school on 1 and 2 July 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 second monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in November 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 newly qualified teachers only after consultation with the lead Her Majesty's Inspector.

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 Strategic Director, Children & Young People's Services for Rotherham.

Yours sincerely

Chris Smith

Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Rapidly improve the quality of teaching so that it is consistently good or better and so that all pupils make good or better progress in reading, writing and mathematics by:
 - eradicating any inadequate teaching that exists
 - making sure all teachers have high expectations about what each pupil is capable of achieving
 - improving teachers' planning so that pupils of all abilities are given appropriately challenging tasks and particularly so that the most-able pupils, those who are lower-attaining and those with special educational needs learn at a fast rate
 - making sure that teachers check closely during lessons that the work given is leading to new learning, particularly when pupils are working out of class
 - making sure that pupils are given enough time in lessons to develop their skills and knowledge for themselves
 - making sure that pupils spend enough time in lessons working on interesting and challenging activities that motivate them and result in them developing good attitudes to learning
 - developing the role of teaching assistants so that they can make a more effective contribution to developing pupils' basic skills.

- Improve pupils' basic skills in reading, writing and mathematics, so that they reach above average levels of attainment by the end of Year 6 and are well prepared for the next stage of their education by:
 - improving pupils' accuracy in their use of grammar, spelling and punctuation
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to use and apply their literacy and numeracy skills in all their lessons across the curriculum
 - providing regular and frequent opportunities for pupils to use their mathematical calculation skills to work things out for themselves, both mentally and in writing, and use them to solve problems
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to practise their reading skills so that they build well on their good start in learning to read.

- Urgently improve the school's leadership and management so that improvement is driven forward at a rapid rate by:
 - making sure that greater account is taken of pupils' progress when undertaking observations of teaching so that the school's view of its effectiveness is more accurate
 - making sure that leaders check more carefully that all teachers' assessments at the end of every year are accurate, and particularly the end of Reception, Year 2 and Year 6
 - ensuring that leaders at all levels rigorously check the impact of their work in the areas for which they are accountable, especially in terms of improving achievement and the quality of teaching
 - ensuring subject leaders contribute effectively to supporting other teachers
 - making sure that improvement plans contain clear, specific and measurable priorities, against which progress can be regularly evaluated
 - increasing the impact of the performance management of staff by ensuring that they are held fully accountable for pupils' progress and improving the quality of their classroom practice.

- Strengthen the effectiveness of the governing body in holding the school to account by:
 - ensuring that governors challenge leaders more rigorously about pupils' achievement and the quality of teaching
 - providing thorough training for new governors so that they fully understand their roles and responsibilities
 - undertaking an external review of governance, to include a specific focus on the school's use of the pupil premium, in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and governance may be improved.

Report on the second monitoring inspection on 1-2 July 2014.

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher and other senior leaders, a group of teachers, two teaching assistants, the Chair of the Governing Body and one other governor and a representative of the local authority. Sixteen lesson observations were completed, five of which were undertaken jointly with senior leaders. A work scrutiny of Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 books was undertaken. Inspectors did not observe teaching of Key Stage 1 classes, because these pupils were out of school on planned activities, or of Year 6 classes, as those pupils had already transferred to their secondary schools.

Context

Since the last monitoring inspection in March 2014, one teacher has left the school. The class has been covered by a supply teacher. At the end of the summer term, one other teacher will leave the school. With my agreement, two newly qualified teachers have been appointed and will take up their posts in September.

Achievement of pupils at the school

Much has been done to ensure assessments in the school are more accurate and reliable. The headteacher has ensured assessments have been tightly moderated. The local authority has also checked the accuracy of assessment in the Early Years Foundation Stage and writing assessments at Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2, and found them to be accurate.

The outcomes of Key Stage 2 national testing in 2014 are not yet available; however, the school expects attainment to rise in reading, writing and mathematics, with more pupils attaining higher levels. Assessments at the end of Key Stage 1 show higher attainment than in 2013. Again, improvements have been made across reading, writing and mathematics, with more pupils attaining the higher level.

The school's recent analysis of pupils' progress indicates pupils in most year groups have made good progress this year, which has helped to overcome underachievement in the past. Consequently, rates of progress in reading, writing and mathematics are now close to the national averages. Pupils have made slower progress in some year groups due to weaknesses in the quality of teaching. Recent changes to staffing and the impact of staff training are now improving rates of progress for these pupils.

Pupils supported by the pupil premium (additional government funding) still make less progress than their peers. Currently they make around two terms less progress across Key Stage 2. However, improvements in the support provided for these pupils are helping to narrow gaps lower down the school.

The quality of teaching

The quality of teaching is improving. The headteacher has taken decisive action to tackle the weakest teaching and there is no longer any teaching that is inadequate. There is teaching

that requires improvement, but, as a result of the introduction of common approaches to lesson planning, regular professional development and tailored support for individual teachers, more teaching is now good. There are good arrangements in place to strengthen teaching further from September. The headteacher has ensured there will be better opportunities for teachers to work and plan together and arrangements for the induction and ongoing support of newly qualified teachers are thorough.

Senior leaders make frequent checks on the quality of teaching, scrutinise teachers' planning and check the work in pupils' books regularly. As a result, teachers receive regular feedback, which is helping them to refine their practice. There are clear guidelines in place for what all teachers are expected to deliver and staff are responding positively to the challenge.

Better lesson planning means pupils of different abilities are increasingly provided with suitably challenging tasks. The different ability groups in each class are provided with their own success criteria, so they understand what they are learning. Pupils say they value this approach and are keen to achieve the next level. In addition, more lessons have interesting and challenging tasks that engage pupils. The use of collaborative learning approaches by some teachers means pupils are more actively involved in their learning and have more opportunities to work together in pairs or small groups.

Pupils' handwriting and their accuracy in the use of grammar, punctuation and spelling are still variable. This is because teachers' marking does not routinely challenge poor presentation or require pupils to correct spelling errors. A new marking policy will be introduced from September that will address this issue. While there are frequent opportunities for pupils to read and apply their literacy skills across the curriculum, there are fewer opportunities for pupils to use and apply their calculation skills and solve mathematical problems. The numeracy leader has recognised this and has planned more opportunities into the curriculum from September.

Teaching assistants are now being used more effectively to support pupils' learning. Communication between teachers and teaching assistants has improved. This means there is better teamwork between adults in most classrooms. Outside the classroom, the additional support programmes delivered by some teaching assistants are increasingly effective. However, the quality of the support across the team of teaching assistants is variable and more training is required to ensure all can fulfil the necessary standards.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils' attitudes to learning are improving, because teaching is improving. In most lessons, pupils behave well, work effectively with one another and are keen to get on. The use of collaborative learning approaches means pupils are increasingly confident to participate and contribute to discussions. In the few lessons where the pace of learning is too slow, or the teacher spends too long working with one group, some pupils lose interest and their behaviour requires improvement.

The atmosphere around the school is calm. Pupils are polite, respectful of visitors and welcoming. Senior leaders now consult pupils regularly on the impact of new approaches that have been introduced and use this information to tailor their work accordingly.

In 2013-14 attendance has improved on the previous year and is now in line with the national average.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

Since the previous monitoring inspection, the headteacher has continued to provide clear direction and set a demanding pace for improvement. She is well supported by other school leaders who share her ambition for the school. New internal appointments have been made to strengthen leadership. All leaders are determined to ensure the new approaches introduced to improve the quality of teaching and learning become fully embedded. There is a strong commitment to supporting all teachers to improve their practice. Expectations have been raised through the use of tougher targets and the performance of teachers is being managed effectively. Teachers are responding positively to the clear guidance they receive.

Actions to improve the quality of teaching are working and pupils are making better progress in reading, writing and mathematics. This is because teachers' planning is better and learning activities are engaging pupils more actively. Senior leaders have a clear understanding of what needs to be done next to strengthen the teaching of basic skills further.

The governing body has responded fully to the recommendations from the external review of governance. There is a new committee structure in place and much training has been undertaken to equip governors for specialist roles. A leadership group, comprised of each committee chair, has been formed to steer the work of the governing body. In addition, the Evaluation Group is systematically checking on the impact of planned actions and is well informed about pupils' progress and the quality of teaching. Governors have made a number of focused visits to look at the use of pupil premium funding, the teaching of mathematics and support for pupils with special educational needs. Consequently, the increasingly detailed knowledge they hold ensures they now challenge senior leaders effectively.

The Department for Education has proposed a local academy trust becomes the sponsor for the school. The governors are required to consider the proposal. The Chair of the Governing Body and the headteacher have met with representatives from the trust to explore the proposal in more detail. However, the headteacher and governors are pleased with the improvements being made and are concerned the momentum in the school could be undermined. They are also concerned that uncertainty about the future leadership of the school is limiting the development of longer-term plans and could unsettle staff.

External support

The school is working closely with the local authority and other schools in the local learning community. Good strategic support is being provided by the consultant headteacher. Local authority literacy and numeracy consultants have also had a positive impact in developing the skills of middle and senior leaders. Special educational needs provision has been reviewed and improved with the help of local authority staff.

Teachers have continued to visit other schools to observe good practice and have brought back ideas which have been shared in staff meetings and training sessions.

A recent review, led by the local authority, has provided a useful external check on the impact of actions the school has taken. The recommendations from the review have quickly been acted upon by the headteacher.