

CfBT Inspection Services
Suite 22
West Lancs Investment
Centre
Maple View
Skelmersdale
WN8 9TG

T 0300 123 1231

Text Phone: 0161 618 8524

enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

www.ofsted.gov.uk

Direct T 01695 566932

Direct F 01695 729320

Direct email: hcarnall@cfbt.com



17 October 2014

Mrs Rebecca Flynn
Headteacher
St Teresa's Catholic Primary School, Devon Street
Devon Street
St Helens
Merseyside
WA10 4HX

Dear Mrs Flynn

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to St Teresa's Catholic Primary School, Devon Street, St. Helens

Following my visit to the school on 16 October 2014, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection 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 June 2014. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. At its previous section 5 inspection the school was also judged to require improvement.

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:

- review how reading is taught, particularly early reading through using phonics (the sounds that letters represent in words). This is so that more children can use their knowledge of phonics to read and write unfamiliar words and so that pupils' reading books are challenging enough
- tackle name-calling in school
- make sure mathematics plans enable pupils to make good progress in their ability to solve problems and to develop their understanding and reasoning.

Evidence

I held a meeting with you and then with senior leaders. I met with a representative of the local authority and with a representative of the archdiocese. I discussed the school's actions taken to improve since the previous inspection with two members of the governing body and with members of the school council. I analysed some of the school's improvement plans such as the plan for mathematics, for special educational needs and for the Early Years Foundation Stage (Reception).

Context

Since the inspection the previous headteacher has retired. Two teachers and a new headteacher started in September. There have been some changes to teachers' responsibilities including a change to the teacher who coordinates teaching for special educational needs pupils (SENCo). The senior leadership team has expanded to include the subject leader for English and the SENCo. A foundation governor left the governing body and two new governors have been appointed. However there are still two vacancies.

Main findings

The previous year's work to improve pupils' achievement has been unsuccessful and standards have dipped. For example, the proportion of pupils who attained the expected ability in using phonics to read words is now below average. Similarly, at the end of Year 6, 10% fewer pupils attained the expected level in reading for their age than in the previous year. In Years 1 and 2, the amount of time in the curriculum focussed on learning to read and write phonics is too little.

There have been some improvements since September. Small-group reading led by an adult now takes place in each class which means that pupils get to read to an adult at least once a week to discuss reading, characters and books. Pupils that spoke with me said their reading books are often too easy and not matched to their reading abilities; however they agreed that they are reading more now than they did last year.

Since September there has been a greater focus on writing. There are new assessments in place and importantly, the results of the assessments are now used to plan lessons to tackle any errors or to extend pupils' skills. Pupils confirmed they now write at least once a week. Although it is still not enough it is better than it was in the previous year. Pupils confirmed that marking had improved and in writing they now know what they need to do to improve their next piece of written work.

An improvement since the inspection is the promotion of the teacher who leads English to the senior leadership team which means she can make and carry forward decisions and improvements. New subject teams have been formed which means

more teachers are now responsible for delivering improvements in English and mathematics.

Pupils said that teaching in mathematics is getting better. Senior leaders have taken the decision to group pupils according to their ability which means the more-able pupils are challenged more as they work with older pupils. The impact of the initiative has not shown yet but it is popular with pupils, as one pupil said, "we are not distracted anymore and can get on with our work." Although the new National Curriculum for mathematics has been introduced there has been no staff training as yet in its three aims which means there is still a lack of knowledge of how to develop pupils' reasoning and understanding of mathematics across the school and systematically teach problem solving. Since September there has been a change to the timetable which means pupils now have a weekly mental mathematics assessment and lesson. It is early days to see whether this has had any impact.

The data provided to governors about pupils' achievement in mathematics and English has improved. As a result they feel better equipped to challenge the school and to ask difficult questions. There are still two vacancies on the governing body yet to be filled which means the governing body is not yet at full capacity.

P confirmed that there is still some name-calling for example teasing about a pupil's name or about how they looked. The headteacher confirmed there had been some racist language used in school and some other derogatory language such as 'that's so gay'. The school, to become good at its next inspection, needs to revisit its values and its mission statement and instill a culture of respect for all and eradicate unkind name-calling.

Although there has been a change in senior leadership there has been no time lost. The deputy headteacher has continued very good work preparing teachers for the new National Curriculum and establishing systems to assess pupils' attainment and progress in subjects other than English and mathematics. There is no impact on achievement as yet.

The headteacher has quickly established herself and made some appropriate changes such as expanding the senior management team and changing the system for pupils entering the school. Pupils like the changes and the fact they can try to win 'best line'. The change is also popular with parents and carers as they are able to speak with teachers before school starts. The start to the morning and afternoon sessions are now more orderly. Some changes, for example to the systems to assess pupils' attainment and progress need to re-visited because they are based on the old National Curriculum rather than the new which started at the beginning of September.

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

The local authority has provided support to the teacher leading English and the teacher in charge of the Early Years Foundation Stage. These teachers have improved the quality of their monitoring, their improvement planning and their leadership of initiatives. The improvements to the school are fragile so the teachers and senior leaders will need more support and challenge in the next year if the school is to be judged as good at its next inspection.

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

Yours sincerely

Allan Torr
Her Majesty's Inspector