

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

T 0300 123 1231

Text Phone: 0161 6188524  
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk  
[www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

Direct T 01695 566857

Direct F 01695 729320

Direct email: jkinsamn@cfbt.com



27 November 2014

Mrs Pam Potter  
Executive headteacher  
Ashurst Primary School  
New Glade Hill  
Off Chain Lane  
Blackbrook  
St Helens  
Merseyside  
WA11 9QJ

Dear Mrs Potter

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Ashurst Primary School, St. Helens**

Following my visit to your school on 26 November 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 second monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in July 2013. 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:

- work together as a staff team to ensure that the quality of teaching continues to strengthen
- make sure that the skills and abilities of the children joining the Nursery are properly assessed
- manage the situation at the school so that leadership can lead the school on its journey quickly
- ensure the school's website meets the current Department for Education's requirements.

## **Evidence**

During the inspection, meetings were held with you, the Chair and Vice Chair of Governors, the deputy headteacher, a group of seven Year 6 pupils, and a representative of the local authority (LA) to discuss the action taken since the last inspection and since my first visit. A variety of documents were evaluated which included: the school self-evaluation, the improvement plan, tracking information of pupils' progress, your records of lesson observations, minutes of governing body meetings, and the LA's report on a behaviour and safeguarding inspection of the school.

## **Context**

The headteacher is on sickness leave and you took up the role of executive headteacher from the third week in September. A senior teacher took up her new role as deputy headteacher from the 1 September and provides leadership for the two and a half days you are not on site. This model will continue until the return of the headteacher. Three Newly Qualified Teachers (NQTs) joined the school and most members of staff are either new from September 2014 or have been appointed in the last twelve months. Three teaching assistants have recently left the school. You are actively recruiting for a new Pastoral Manager.

## **Main findings**

You have taken immediate action to build the capacity of the leadership team, improve behaviour, ensure that pupils are safe and secure, and strengthen the quality of teaching. Through observing teachers' practice, looking at pupils' workbooks, scrutinising documentation and talking to members of the school community you have fully evaluated all aspects of the school's work. Consequently you know the strengths on which the school can build and recognise the work that needs to be done to quicken the rate of progress for the school to become good. You quickly took action to tighten safeguarding systems and ensure the health and safety of pupils. A, deep clean, decoration of the building and de-clutter of resources has led to a bright, attractive classrooms and areas, especially in the Early Years Foundation Stage. You are supported very effectively by the new deputy headteacher who is using you as a role model to quickly build up her strengths and knowledge of how to lead the school.

Swiftly you have re-written the school improvement plan so that it strictly guides the work of all involved. Planned action links to the affect it will have on pupils' achievement. Through reviewing roles and responsibilities of all staff, including senior leaders, you have raised their expectations and set a clear vision for the school's future success. You have rightly kept the focus on improving the quality of teaching as you work towards creating a team committed to raising pupils' standards in reading, writing and mathematics for all groups of pupils. Targets for teachers'

performance are now tightly linked to the progress the pupils in their class will make and they are answerable to you to make sure pupils succeed. You have used practice in your school to show teachers what strong teaching and learning looks like and you have linked teachers from both schools across year groups. Using a co-coaching model you are already seeing a difference in the practice in the classroom at Ahsurst. All teachers have an individual plan which supports their development and guides them to reflect on their practice. You have also used external support such as a mathematics consultant to improve teachers' skills in this subject. For example, teachers know how to plan progression in an aspect of mathematics so that pupils have more chances to deepen their learning; each group of pupils has a 'toolbox' for mathematics so that they have the resources they need to 'do maths'; Key Stage 1 pupils are working in mathematics books with squares to help them understand place value better and to take pride in presentation. Teachers and teaching assistants have received training on phonics (the sounds letters make) so that no time is lost in pupils acquiring these skills. For example, you have already moved pupils into more challenging groups as they quickly learn new skills. The deputy headteacher tours the school during phonics' sessions so that she can check the quality of teaching but also to offer support and expertise to colleagues.

You recognise the importance of a secure baseline from which to measure progress and introduced a new tracking system. You consider that most of the assessment information is secure from Year 1 through to Year 6 but are less confident in the Early Years Foundation Stage. You are taking steps to rectify this so that you will be able to plot the progress of pupils from Nursery through the school and intervene when pupils are underachieving or need more challenge. You are working with staff to raise their competence in how to assess pupils' work more effectively.

Much work has taken place in the Early Years Foundation Stage to reflect an environment which enables children to choose and use the resources they need to support their learning. There is still work to be done to provide time for teachers to take small groups for specific teaching sessions so children are ready for Key Stage 1.

The Governing Body has been instrumental in making sure that there is strong leadership in place during the headteacher's absence. The drop in the 2014 results in Key Stages 1 and 2, and their growing knowledge of the school led members to realise that the school needed to move more quickly and for pupils' achievement to rise more rapidly. They have not shied away from making hard decisions and taking action when it is needed. New members have joined the governing body bringing essential skills, such as finance, which will complement the skills held by existing members. Members are linked to individual classes so that they can check on the progress of pupils more readily; they receive pupils' achievement information in a more accessible form so that they are asking more pertinent questions about the progress of groups of pupils. They have released funding for decoration, purchase of resources and for the creation of a library. The Chair of Governors is particularly active in using her networks across the local authority to source equipment and

furniture. Governors have kept staff and parents involved in the decisions taken for the school.

The school is at a critical point in its improvement journey. It is essential that the new profile of teachers works together to provide high quality practice for all groups of pupils. Likewise it is essential that the skills and abilities of the children joining the Nursery and Reception classes are securely assessed, so that the revised assessment and tracking system can be used effectively in making sure pupils reach the high standards they are capable of.

### **External support**

The local authority (LA) has provided a variety of good quality support for the school. They worked together with the governors to ensure strong leadership in the absence of the headteacher. Officers have conducted a behaviour and safety review to help the school to pinpoint any action needed to make sure pupils are kept safe and secure. The LA adviser has organised training from the mathematics and Early Years' consultants. There is a planned review of the effectiveness of the school in January 2015.

Ofsted may carry out further visits and, where necessary, provide further support and challenge to the school until its next section 5 inspection.

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

Yours sincerely

Eileen Mulgrew

**Her Majesty's Inspector**