

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 566933
Direct F 01695 729320
Direct email:
ggleaden@cfbt.com



23 January 2015

Mrs Catherine Gordon
Executive Headteacher
Our Lady's RC Primary School Manchester
Whalley Road
Whalley Range
Manchester
M16 8AW

Dear Mrs Gordon

Special measures monitoring inspection of Our Lady's RC Primary School Manchester

Following my visit to your school on 21 and 22 January 2015, 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 third monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in February 2014. 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 before the next monitoring inspection.

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 Interim Executive Board, the Interim Director of Children's Services for Manchester and the Director of the Diocese of Salford.

Yours sincerely

Joanne Olsson

Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in February 2014

- Urgently improve the quality of teaching in Key Stages 1 and 2 so that it is at least good in order to raise standards so pupils achieve well by ensuring:
 - teachers have an accurate view of what pupils already know so that they can plan work which builds on pupils' existing knowledge and skills and supports them in making rapid progress
 - that all staff in school have high expectations of what the pupils can achieve in their learning and that teachers plan activities that will challenge pupils, especially the most able
 - that feedback given to pupils in lessons and in their books evaluates their learning effectively and gives them clear guidance on how to improve
 - teachers are able to accurately identify the progress pupils make in their work and make accurate assessments about the standards they are achieving.

- Raise standards, particularly in mathematics, by:
 - providing all staff with high-quality training so that they improve their subject knowledge and have a very good understanding of how pupils progress in developing their mathematics skills
 - ensuring that pupils have regular, well-planned opportunities to use and apply their mathematics skills in a range of subjects and that the most able pupils, in particular, are challenged in their thinking
 - monitoring the quality of teaching in mathematics and assessing pupils' progress regularly so that any underperformance is quickly identified and improved upon.

- Urgently improve the effectiveness of leadership and management including governance by:
 - strengthening and stabilising the leadership team so that senior and middle leaders have a clear understanding of their individual roles and responsibilities
 - ensuring that the school's evaluation of its own work is accurate and based on rigorous checking of pupils' achievement, and that leaders use this information to direct their plans for improvement more effectively
 - making effective use of assessment systems and information to monitor pupils' progress and the standards they achieve in all subjects and all classes
 - ensuring that teachers' performance-management targets are closely linked to pupils' achievement and that staff are robustly held accountable for the progress of the pupils in their classes
 - ensuring that governors are well informed about the school's performance and have the skills necessary to hold the school to account effectively
 - maintaining detailed records of behaviour incidents and analysing the results so that school leaders can identify any patterns and support pupils effectively
 - making sure that the school's website includes information about the pupil premium grant and the impact of how it is spent.

- Ensure the governing body meets statutory safeguarding requirements by making certain the designated child-protection leader attends the required training.

Report on the third monitoring inspection on 21 and 22 January 2015.

Evidence

Her Majesty's Inspector observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the executive headteacher, the head of school, senior leaders, subject leaders for English and mathematics and the Chair of the Interim Executive Board (IEB). She also held discussions with staff, three groups of pupils, nine parents and a representative from the local authority and the diocese. The inspector observed 11 lessons, led by eight teachers, alongside senior leaders. The inspector chatted to pupils during play and lunchtime and to parents at the start of the day. Pupils' books were also scrutinised.

Context

One teacher left at the end of the autumn term and another has returned to teaching small groups of pupils. Two new teachers took up post in January. They are teaching in Year 3 and Year 4. The special educational needs coordinator remains on extended leave. Another part-time teacher is also on long-term absence.

Achievement of pupils at the school

Achievement is improving steadily. Children in the early years are getting off to the right start. An increasing focus on early reading, writing and mathematics is setting them up well for the next stage of their learning. The successes gained in Key Stage 1 last year are set to continue. More pupils in Year 6 are working at the levels expected for their age because gaps in their learning are being tackled head on. However, there is still some way to go for pupils in Year 3 and Year 4 to achieve as well as they should from their different starting points.

As the achievement of all pupils improves, gaps between different groups are beginning to emerge. Disadvantaged pupils are making better progress. Nonetheless, they still lag behind other pupils in the school. The achievement of disabled pupils, pupils with special educational needs and those pupils who are the most able is more varied. In some classes these groups are blossoming; in others they are treading water.

Pupils are rising to the challenge of higher teacher expectations. They are willing to work hard and they are prepared to keep going even when their work makes them think hard. Pupils are presenting their work more carefully; this reflects their increasing pride in their learning. Achievement in mathematics is getting stronger because pupils have a firmer grasp of number and a range of strategies to tackle calculations. In some classes, pupils are overcoming gaps in spelling, punctuation and grammar skills so their writing is beginning to capture their imaginative ideas well. This is not true for all pupils; some are not making quick enough gains in their learning because they have not mastered the basics well enough. Pupils' achievement in subjects other than English and mathematics is not improving as quickly.

The quality of teaching

Stronger teaching is becoming the norm rather than the exception. Teachers are more skilled at checking on pupils' progress and using this information to plan suitable activities. Teachers no

longer follow published schemes slavishly; they are much better at adapting work so it builds on what pupils already know. Lessons are livelier because teachers take the time to couch activities in meaningful contexts. Teaching assistants are proving to be a valuable asset. They enhance pupils' learning through skilful questions and gentle intervention when they spot any pupil who is struggling. Most teachers have set their sights higher; they are expecting more of pupils. As a result, the quality and quantity of pupils' work are improving over time.

Not all teaching is matching the best. Sometimes, pupils make slower progress because teachers do not model new learning well; their instructions lack clarity or they do not expect pupils to work with sufficient urgency. All teachers are following the marking policy and offering pupils' advice on how to improve their work. Nonetheless, this guidance centres too much on correcting errors rather than deepening pupils' mathematical understanding or extending their ability to write with flair.

The teaching of mathematics is moving forward nicely because teachers have stronger subject knowledge and they are not chained to a published scheme. Some teachers have got to grips with the new National Curriculum quickly, making sure pupils can solve challenging problems systematically using logic and reasoning skills. Teachers are providing more opportunities for pupils to practise their writing skills, particularly across other subjects. This is not true for mathematics.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Eager and happy pupils cross the school gates in the morning. The warm welcome they receive from adults and their peers sets the tone for the day. Harmonious relationships in classrooms, on the playground and during assemblies underpin pupils' considerate behaviour to each other, to staff and to visitors. Trust, respect and tolerance are a rich vein that runs throughout the school. The sense of family and community is going a long way in reducing incidents of poor behaviour, preventing bullying and preparing pupils for life in modern day Britain. Different groups of pupils are keen to come to school; attendance continues to exceed the national average and more pupils are on time for the start of lessons.

Pupils are fiercely proud of their school. They say teaching is improving and behaviour is almost perfect. Their views ring true with the evidence gathered during the inspection. Behaviour is improving because pupils are enjoying their learning more. The time invested in helping pupils to manage their own behaviour is paying dividends. More pupils are making the right choices; the number of detentions is falling and very few pupils miss out on the 'Joy Days' as a result of poor behaviour.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

Ambitious and determined leadership is setting the school on a steady course towards recovery. Despite facing considerable challenges with staff coming and going, the executive headteacher and head of school have stood their ground. They have refused to lower their expectations because they have pupils' best interests at the heart of their work. Leaders are taking the right actions, rather than opting for easy, short-term solutions. As a result, the positive improvements in teaching and learning are here to stay. Change is being managed sensitively. No one is letting go of the essential work which makes Our Lady's a special place within the local community. Staff have turned a corner. They are no longer lamenting the past

because they can see the difference their hard work is making to the pupils in their care. Morale is high.

Senior leaders know where teaching is strong and where it is not quite hitting the mark because they are constantly checking what is happening in each classroom. Teachers benefit from quality feedback, clear targets for improvement and support which meets their individual needs. New teachers are being brought into the fold quickly because of good induction arrangements.

Other leaders are stepping up to the mark. The subject leaders for English and mathematics have been instrumental in reshaping the published schemes of work to ensure they meet pupils' needs and interests. Although still relatively new, other senior leaders are rising to the challenge. They are quickly making a difference to the day-to-day running of the school. This is beginning to share the workload more evenly. Nevertheless, they are in the early stages of driving improvements to teaching. Due to staff absence, the role of the special educational needs coordinator is not moving forward as quickly. The needs of disabled pupils and pupils with special educational needs are managed well on a daily basis. However, no one has a good enough view on how well teaching meets the needs of this group or how well they fare against others in the school.

Members of the IEB are making a strong contribution to school improvement. They are asking the right questions to keep everyone on track. They have an honest and accurate understanding of what the school needs to do to secure success because they meet frequently and keep a keen eye on pupils' achievement and teaching. They have cast their net wider since the last inspection, meeting parents, staff and other senior leaders to make sure they are not relying solely on the information provided by the executive headteacher to inform their views.

Parents are overwhelmingly positive about the changes at the school. This is reflected in the responses on Parent View (the online questionnaire). The parents spoken to during the inspection have no qualms about pupils' safety, behaviour or progress at the school.

Staff training on e-safety means the systems for keeping pupils safe have been tightened further. Incidents of poor behaviour are closely monitored and recorded. The weekly behaviour assembly is used well to tackle common issues, remind pupils of the five rules and encourage them to make the right choices. Consequently, pupils' behaviour and safety are improving strongly over time.

External support

External support has improved. It is effective and valued by school leaders. A local authority officer is working closely with the school to keep an eye on progress; to support senior leaders in making judgements and to act as a sounding board for new ideas and strategies. As a result, officers are able to broker appropriate support which matches the precise needs of the school. Officers respond swiftly to calls for help, for example, the early years leaders has benefited from an external partner checking the assessment of children's skills on entry to Nursery are accurate. Links with the partner school continue to be exploited. This is helping members of the senior leadership team grasp their new roles quickly and confidently.