

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

Direct T 01695 566863

Direct F 01695 729320

Direct email:jbennett@cfbt.com



4 March 2015

Mrs Hayley Brooker
Acting Headteacher
Old Hall Drive Primary School
Old Hall Drive
Gorton
Manchester
M18 7FU

Dear Mrs Brooker

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Old Hall Drive Primary School, Manchester

Following my visit to your school on 3 March 2015, 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.

This visit was the second 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:

- sharpen the time-scales in the school's action plan, so that planned actions have definite start and end dates, enabling governors to identify when they will measure the impact of the actions being taken to improve the school
- continue to improve the quality of marking in mathematics, so that it positively impacts on pupils' progress.

Evidence

During my visit, I held meetings with you and the acting deputy headteacher to determine the progress that you and your colleagues are making against each of the areas for improvement identified by inspectors at the school's most recent inspection. I also met with four governors including the Chair of the Governing Body, the subject leaders for literacy and numeracy, a representative of the local authority, the executive headteacher and a group of pupils of different ages. I made short visits to two classrooms, where I observed pupils from Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 undertaking activities to develop their ability as writers. Assisted by the subject leaders for literacy and numeracy, I scrutinised the work in a sample of pupils' books. This enabled me to evaluate the quality of teachers' marking and the progress pupils are making, particularly in writing and mathematics. I examined the minutes of governing body meetings held since my previous visit and I reviewed the school's action plan. I also considered senior leaders' most recent data on pupils' attainment and progress.

Context

Since my previous visit, the headteacher has left the school and one of the assistant headteachers has taken maternity leave. As a result of these changes, the governors acted quickly to calm the resulting turbulence in staffing, promoting you to the post of acting headteacher and one of your colleagues to the post of acting deputy headteacher. Two teaching assistants left their posts at the end of the autumn term.

Three teachers have joined the staff and the governors have appointed a parent support adviser to improve communication between home and school.

Main findings

Since my previous visit you have rewritten the school's action plan. It is now clear what the improvement priorities are and the order in which they are to be tackled. Consequently, staff are channelling their energies effectively to address the school's most pressing needs and accelerate the pace of change. However, some of the time-scales in the plan could be sharper. For example, although planned actions to improve the school have start dates it is not always clear when they will be considered to have been completed, thus making it difficult for governors to determine whether or not an action has been effective.

The governors have supported you in restructuring the middle leadership team. This has enabled you to match, more closely, middle leaders' curriculum expertise with the core subject areas of literacy and numeracy. As a result, the lines of accountability for these two subject areas are much clearer than was the case at my previous visit. Further, the work to refine and develop the curriculum for writing, although in its early stages, is already beginning to bear fruit. The teachers with responsibility for literacy, working with a colleague from the local teaching schools'

alliance have developed an effective strategy for motivating pupils to write about topics that interest them. It was evident in the lessons that I visited that the 'mystery of the lily pads' and the audacity of a national retailer's plans to buy the school's playing fields to build a new store, had captured the pupils' imaginations and fired their enthusiasm for writing in a range of styles. Teachers have undergone a structured programme of training to ensure that their approach to the teaching of writing is consistent both within and across year groups. Although it is early days, the school's data are already indicating that this approach is accelerating all groups of pupils' progress across the school in this aspect of literacy. However, although a pleasing development, this progress is from a relatively low base and gaps in attainment between the girls and boys and disadvantaged pupils and their peers in Year 6, although closing, still remain.

Although senior leaders have identified writing as the foremost priority on the school's improvement journey, they have not lost sight of the need to improve mathematics across the school. Following my previous visit, all staff with responsibility for teaching mathematics have evaluated their subject expertise and are receiving training to fill any gaps in their knowledge. Senior leaders' report, that this is enabling staff to approach the teaching of the new National Curriculum in mathematics, with its emphasis on mastery, with greater confidence. Further, the joint subject leaders for mathematics have introduced a new calculations policy and are steering the curriculum in mathematics towards an approach that encourages problem-solving and places greater emphasis on pupils' mathematical reasoning. However, although the school's data on pupils' progress in mathematics are encouraging, the school's initiatives to improve mathematics are relatively new and consequently it is too early to assess their long term impact on pupils' outcomes.

Evidence from my scrutiny of pupils' written work, demonstrates that senior leaders' efforts to improve the quality of marking continues to have a positive impact on pupils' progress in writing. However, teachers' marking in mathematics is not as effective and as a result pupils' progress in this subject is not as marked.

There is a palpable sense of purpose, energy and drive to senior leaders' work. The staff I met during my visit confirmed this view. They said that this is establishing a consistency of approach to teachers' professional practice and a clear sense of purpose to their work leading to an accelerated pace of change. However, those same staff, whilst being optimistic, expressed the opinion that the pace of change needs to be sustained if the school is to continue on its upward trajectory.

Governors know the school well. They provide an appropriate balance of support and challenge to senior leaders in their work to improve the school. The governors' performance committee meets fortnightly. This enables them to keep a close eye on the school's progress against each of the priorities in the school's action plan and hold senior leaders to account.

The review of the pupil premium recommended at the most recent inspection has been carried out. Governors now have a much clearer picture of how this funding is being directed with its intended impact.

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

Since my previous visit the governors, with the help of the local authority, have forged an effective link with two local successful schools, Brookburn Primary School and Chorlton Church of England Primary School. Both schools are part of the local teaching schools' alliance. The headteacher of Brookburn is a National Leader of Education providing support and advice to senior leaders not only in the day-to-day running of the school but also in its long term strategic direction. The subject leader for literacy at Brookburn has been instrumental in helping the subject leaders at Old Hall develop the new strategy for the teaching of writing. Similarly, the subject leader for mathematics at Chorlton is working with staff responsible for mathematics to drive forward improvements in this subject. The governors have also employed the services of an external consultant to check that teachers' assessment of pupils' writing is reliable.

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

Yours sincerely

Charles Lowry

Her Majesty's Inspector