

CfBT Inspection Services  
Suite 22

West Lancs Investment Centre T 0300 123 1231

Maple View

Skelmersdale

WN8 9TG

Text Phone: 0161 6188524

enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

[www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

**Direct T** 01695 566863

**Direct F** 01695 729320

**Direct email:** jbenett@cfbt.com



20 March 2015

Mrs Alixena Lubomski  
Executive Headteacher  
St Stephen's Catholic Primary School, Skipton  
Gargrave Road  
Skipton  
North Yorkshire  
BD23 1PJ

Dear Mrs Lubomski

**Special measures monitoring inspection of St Stephen's Catholic Primary School, Skipton**

Following my visit with Cathryn Kirby Her Majesty's Inspector, to your school on 18 and 19 March 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 not 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 Governing Body, Leeds Catholic Diocese and the Director of Children's Services for North Yorkshire.

Yours sincerely

Gina White

**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Annex**

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

■ Improve the quality of teaching so that it is at least consistently good and enables all pupils in all subjects, especially those in Key Stage 1, to be challenged in their learning and reach their full potential by:

- eradicating inadequate teaching
- ensuring activities are planned to sustain pupils' enthusiasm and concentration and give rise to fewer opportunities for pupils to drift off-task and misbehave
- raising teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve, especially when moving from the Early Years Foundation Stage into Key Stage 1
- ensuring teachers take full account of what pupils already know and can do so that activities challenge them to reach their full potential
- adapting the school's approach to the teaching of phonics (the links between letters and sounds) so that pupils learn new sounds quickly and are given books that allow them to put into practice what they have learned
- providing high-quality professional development and training for staff on how pupils' literacy and numeracy skills develop from year-to-year and to support and develop the skills of all teachers, especially those whose practice is not yet good
- rapidly improving pupils' spelling, handwriting and the presentation of their work
- ensuring pupils can recognise good or better writing so that they are motivated and encouraged to apply the same principles in their own work
- sharing the best practice evident within the school more widely so that all teachers can learn from the best and improve their skills
- addressing the inconsistencies evident in teachers' marking and feedback so that pupils more readily address their errors and misconceptions
- ensuring that the activities children choose for themselves in the Early Years Foundation Stage are sufficiently challenging, especially for those who are most able, so that children make even more rapid progress in their learning and play.

■ Improve behaviour and attendance so that they are at least good by ensuring that:

- swift action is taken to implement the strategies and actions arising from the external review of behaviour and attendance
- senior leaders review and evaluate the impact of actions already taken to improve behaviour, and make sure that the pupils' views are listened to and considered
- all instances of reported bullying are followed up thoroughly and monitored closely to prevent them from reoccurring and to reassure pupils and parents.

- Improve the leadership and management of the school by:
  - ensuring that middle leaders clearly understand their roles and responsibilities and are able to fulfil them
  - taking swift and effective action to improve the quality of information used to check pupils' progress; analysing this information rigorously to provide an accurate assessment of the school's performance
  - reporting rigorously and robustly on the progress made by different groups of pupils, including those supported by the pupil premium, and rapidly identifying individuals and groups of pupils at risk of underachievement
  - monitoring the performance of teachers in accordance with the National Teachers' Standards
  - checking the quality of teaching and learning more closely to ensure all staff meet the expected professional standards and are held to account for closing gaps in pupils' achievement
  - analysing and evaluating the effectiveness of school initiatives and the impact of the additional support provided to individuals and groups of pupils
  - ensuring governors provide robust challenge for leaders and carry out and commission their own checks rather than relying solely on the headteacher's view.
  
- An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and governance may be improved.
  
- An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and governance may be improved.

## **Report on the third monitoring inspection on 18 – 19 March 2015**

### **Evidence**

Inspectors observed the work of the school including teaching in 13 lessons and pupils' behaviour in and around the school site. They met with the executive headteacher and assistant headteacher, teachers and groups of staff. They also met with groups of pupils and with governors including the vice-chair of the governing body. Telephone discussions were held with representatives from the local authority and Leeds Catholic Diocese. Inspectors took account of 29 responses submitted this academic year to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and also spoke with parents as they collected their children from school. Inspectors looked at a range of documents including pupils' books and assessment data and records relating to governance, school planning and the monitoring of teaching, behaviour, attendance and safety.

### **Context**

The substantive headteacher remains absent from school and an executive headteacher and assistant headteacher provide leadership and management of the school weekly for two and three days, respectively. Temporary teachers are teaching in Year 6 and in Year 2 to cover illness and the additional time needed to fulfil management commitments. The Year 1 class teacher has resigned and leaves at the end of term and the school has yet to secure a replacement. The diocese and governors have applied to the Department for Education for the school to become a sponsored academy with the Bishop Wheeler Trust.

### **Achievement of pupils at the school**

Work to develop reading throughout the school is having a positive impact on pupils' writing especially in Years 2 and 6. School data also shows steady improvements in reading across most classes as a result of regular reading sessions. In Year 2, pupils are starting to recognise the characteristics and features of an author's work. Pupils in Year 5 are acquiring a deep knowledge of the work of authors and styles of writing and speak confidently about a wide range of different types of books. In Year 6 many pupils are making faster progress in reading and writing and are starting to overcome the legacy of underachievement.

Despite the overall very recent and positive trend in school data, rates of progress in writing and mathematics remain varied across classes in Key Stage 1 and lower Key Stage 2. The pace and challenge of work, particularly in developing pupils' mathematical reasoning and problem-solving skills is not improving quickly because teaching is not planned well enough to develop pupils' knowledge and understanding securely. Many pupils in Years 5 and 6 have yet to make up for previously weak teaching in Key Stage 2. Better analysis of assessment data is starting to identify pupils who are beginning to fall behind with writing and mathematics. Around one-

fifth of pupils are receiving additional support to catch-up. However, some disparity exists in the rigour and use of assessment in the early years and in Year 1.

The progress of groups of pupils, particularly the most able pupils, those with disabilities and special educational needs, and those who are disadvantaged is starting to be monitored more carefully. The pupil premium coordinator, with the support of an experienced governor, is starting to identify pupils' needs and is putting support in place to overcome barriers to learning. In lessons there are no noticeable differences in boys' or girls' participation, responsiveness to questions, concentration or the quality and quantity of work they produce.

### **The quality of teaching**

Teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are starting to rise in response to a whole-school focus on reading and writing. The impact of training is evident in classrooms. Teachers' understanding of how to teach reading and writing is developing more securely and there is now more challenge to the tasks pupils are given in lessons, especially for the most able pupils in Key Stage 2. In Key Stage 2 classes pupils are beginning to write imaginatively and at length. Pupils' mastery of spelling, punctuation and grammar are improving. As a result of improvements to teaching pupils are supported better in lessons and the numbers who need to be referred for additional, intensive support are falling.

Pupils' response to the more interesting activities is good; they are keen to take on more challenging work and they sustain their concentration very well. Readers, particularly boys, are engrossed in reading. At the start of lessons, pupils in Year 1 and Year 2 classes indicate they are ready for a challenge with a 'thumbs up'. Pupils say that work is harder and they are enjoying the challenge, but they also report that it is uneven across different lessons.

Teachers in Year 2 and Year 6 classes are using their reviews of learning and regular tests more carefully to identify when pupils' understanding is less secure. They are making better use of this information to adjust their teaching. Work in small groups or to the whole class is more securely focused on closing these gaps and moving learning on. This is starting to happen in other classes too, although teachers' own skills in checking pupils understanding, diagnosing misconceptions, and planning activities to tackle them are weaker, particularly in mathematics. Teachers and teaching assistants have not received support to build their skills and confidence in supporting small group work in mathematics, leaving them feeling that they are not always having the same impact in supporting in mathematics as in literacy.

Work is not adjusted well to ensure that the most able pupils and those who enter Key Stage 1 with below expected levels, are challenged and supported equally well to quickly develop literacy and numeracy skills. Teaching in Nursery and Reception classes also varies in quality and in its challenge for all children. This is because the

expectations for individual children and targets are not always recorded and shared across the team of teaching assistants in a timely fashion. This lack of knowledge slows children's learning and progress because the next steps for each child are not always clear.

### **Behaviour and safety of pupils**

The school's behaviour policy is implemented with increasing consistency and effect in lessons following the recent review. Expectations of behaviour are communicated explicitly and widely and incidents of poor behaviour and bullying have reduced. Pupils, parents, teachers and governors welcome the greater clarity. Younger pupils say that 'Teachers are strict' and pupils in all classes are able to talk in detail about the recognition they receive for good behaviour. Reminders in classrooms and around the school reinforce the consistent messages given by staff. For example, children in the Reception class are encouraged to 'play nicely'. Stories make clear what this means and well-managed discussions enable children to review when things have not gone well and learn how make better choices.

Sharper recording and analysis of behaviour incidents has enabled leaders to identify a small number of young people who need additional support to manage their behaviour. The challenge now is to act with greater rapidity to secure the help that they need. Actions to tackle persistent absence, introduced since the last monitoring inspection, are starting to take effect. Attendance is starting to improve in response, although overall attendance currently remains below the school's targets and well-below national averages.

Although key practices are in place and school staff are acting to keep pupils safe, improvements to the school site to increase security, identified by the school, need to be addressed urgently.

### **The quality of leadership in and management of the school**

The executive headteacher and assistant headteacher are demonstrating their determination to improve the school. They are beginning to re-establish a wide range of systems and procedures. Senior leaders are starting to analyse achievement data more thoroughly and it is being used more effectively to improve the level of challenge in lessons. The success and impact of leaders' work is most evident in their actions to improve behaviour and in pupils' achievement in reading. This is due to very clear procedures, training and shared expectations that have helped staff to implement the reforms quickly and consistently.

Work to improve teaching and assessment in the early years, in Key Stage 1 and in mathematics has been slower to develop. School plans, re-written since the previous monitoring inspection, lack coherence to address these issues. Plans place an

emphasis on what needs to be done but not enough on how to improve, and are weaker in prioritising actions.

Leaders are starting to identify strategies to improve learning, but their evaluations of school effectiveness through observation of teaching and scrutiny of work lack precision and focus on how to improve teaching. Feedback is not helping to develop staff skills, including those of subject leaders, systematically or in sufficient depth in order to tackle the variability in teaching.

The impact of the school's work has been diluted as a result of trying to do too much at once and because responsibilities for implementing the work are unclear. Uncertainty about who will lead the school in the future, and several incidences of staff absence, have broken continuity in teaching for some pupils. Leaders have not always kept parents sufficiently well informed about staffing arrangements.

Governors have found it difficult to work out who does what. They have trusted leaders to tell them how things are going and are not focusing securely on monitoring each of the areas for improvement. Consequently, they have not held the leadership team to account with enough rigour. Discussion during this visit focused on ways forward to prioritise this in future.

### **External support**

The diocese is working closely with governors to support the school in its application to become an academy. Support also continues to be provided for strategic leadership during the absence of the headteacher. The local authority's support to monitor the quality of teaching is providing additional capacity to undertake this essential work; however, the lack of depth emerging around the quality and rigour of the school's monitoring also apply to this work. The large volume of external support, particularly around training and support for middle leaders, has not moved the school forward swiftly.