

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

Direct T 01695 566937

Direct F 01695 729320

Direct email: jsimmons@cfbt.com



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Mrs Andrea Towey
Headteacher
St Augustine's Catholic Primary School
Henshall Avenue
Latchford
Warrington
Cheshire
WA4 1PY

Dear Mrs Towey

Special measures monitoring inspection of St Augustine's Catholic Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 14 and 15 May 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.

This was the third monitoring visit since the school became subject to special measures, following the Section 5 inspection which took place in April 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.

I am copying this letter and the monitoring inspection report to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Governing Body, the Executive Director Families and Wellbeing for Warrington and the Director of Education for the Diocese of Shrewsbury. The letter and the monitoring inspection report will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Aelwyn Pugh
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Rapidly improve the quality of teaching so that it is consistently good or better, in order that pupils across the school make good progress, particularly in mathematics and in writing, by ensuring that:
 - time is regularly given for pupils to check, correct or rewrite their work in response to the guidance given to them through the marking they receive
 - teachers check more frequently on the progress of pupils so work can be adapted more quickly, particularly for the most able, to better meet their learning needs
 - teachers' expectations of pupils' presentation and completion of work are raised
 - support from teaching assistants is always of good quality and is well matched to the individual pupils' needs
 - pupils are given more opportunities to practise and apply their mathematical and writing skills in different subjects, in Years 1 to 6
 - pupils in Years 1 and 2 are secure in their learning and understanding of sounds and letters
 - across Years 1 to 6, pupils consistently spell words correctly, present work neatly, legibly and with accuracy
 - pupils are consistently interested in their work so that their attitudes to learning are always good and they readily respond to teachers' requests to complete their work.

- Urgently increase the impact of leadership at all levels, including governance, by ensuring that:
 - accurate data is used and clearly summarised, to frequently measure the speed and effect of actions taken to improve teaching and pupils' achievement
 - prompt action is taken to enable teachers to meet their individual targets to improve their performance more quickly, particularly in the teaching of mathematics but also in writing
 - senior leaders decisively and more quickly tackle weaknesses in subject leadership, particularly in mathematics.

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 14 and 15 May 2015

Evidence

The inspector observed the school's work, examined documents and held meetings with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, the Chair and five members of the Governing Body, as well as representatives from the local authority and the diocese. He spoke with eight parents who had children in each year of the school and to eight pupils selected at random from Years 3 to 6. He held a meeting with six members of staff and, together with the headteacher or deputy headteacher, observed lessons in each year group. He also spoke with staff and pupils in classes and around the school.

Context

Since the last monitoring inspection, two new governors have been appointed.

Achievement of Pupils at the School

The school's own data indicate that standards are improving. By the end of this year, it is expected that the performance of seven year olds will be in line with last year's national average for mathematics but below that level in reading and writing. The performance of 11 year olds is likely to be in line with the most recent national average in mathematics and better than that in reading and writing. The school's increased focus on attainment, as well as progress, has contributed to this. However, the gap between the performance of disadvantaged pupils and others in the school is still too wide. There are also differences between the performance of boys and girls, although there is no pattern to this. For example, boys perform better than girls in Years 2, 5 and 6 but, in Year 4, the situation is reversed.

The pupils who were heard reading had effective strategies for deciphering words with which they were unfamiliar and read with a fair degree of fluency and expression. They enjoyed reading and talked with enthusiasm about the books they read in school and at home. The newly introduced spelling policy is beginning to have a positive effect, although not all pupils are confident in using dictionaries to help them check on the spelling and meaning of words.

In mathematics lessons, pupils are being given increasing opportunities to relate their learning to real-life situations. They are also becoming more adept at mental calculation.

The quality of teaching

The school's own analysis shows that teaching is improving but at an uneven rate and it is not yet consistently good. This was borne out by the observations

conducted during the inspection. The quality of marking has improved and, in their books, pupils are given clear and regular guidance on what they need to do to improve their work. However, feedback in lessons is not always as helpful as it might be. For example, during the inspection, teachers missed opportunities to help pupils reflect on how they might use alternative words to enrich and extend their writing.

There is still further work to be done to improve questioning. In the lessons seen, some teachers relied too heavily on answers volunteered by pupils rather than asking questions of particular individuals, in order to test their understanding. They did not consistently use supplementary questions to help pupils identify and correct errors, or to extend their thinking.

Teaching assistants are now playing a more active role in the classroom. However, the school has not developed an effective way of managing the increased volume of noise when more than one activity is taking place at the same time within a classroom.

The quality of presentation, both by pupils and teachers, still needs to be improved.

Behaviour and safety

The central record of staff is up to date. The inspector asked that one minor amendment be made to it. The pupils who spoke with the inspector said that they felt safe in the school and in the neighbourhood. They knew how to keep themselves safe, including when using the internet and social media.

The parents who spoke with the inspector were very positive about the school and appreciated the support that they and their children received. They were confident that any incidents of bullying would be dealt with very promptly by staff.

Pupils' behaviour around the school continues to be good. In the lessons seen, most pupils worked with concentration and enthusiasm. Some pupils lost concentration when explanations were unclear or too long. Others worked too slowly when not being directly supervised by a member of staff. Although still below the national average, attendance has improved. However, there was a dip in the spring term because of an outbreak of chicken pox and scarlet fever.

During the inspection, several parents parked on the 'No Waiting' sign outside the school. This is apparently a regular occurrence. It poses a risk to the pupils.

Leadership and management

Since the last monitoring inspection, there have been considerable improvements in the leadership and management of the school. The governing body has been reconstituted and now has full membership. The governors who met the inspector

had a far better understanding of their role and responsibilities than was previously the case and, as a result of the training they have received and the school's improved data management, are now in a stronger position to hold the school to account. They are also taking a far more active part in the life of the school and in monitoring the quality of teaching and learning.

Following the review of the use of pupil premium funding (additional government money), they are now focusing more closely on the performance of disadvantaged pupils. However, no targets have been set for narrowing the gap between the performance of those pupils and that of others in the school.

The headteacher and her deputy headteacher now have a very clear understanding of the importance of raising the pupils' attainment as well as increasing their rates of progress. They have established ambitious targets for the next 12 months and now show a clear confidence in the school's ability to achieve them. Through the new data tracking system and regular pupil performance reviews, staff are being helped to analyse the impact of their teaching on learning and to revise and adapt their approaches in the light of this. Subject leaders are now taking an increasing role in monitoring standards. The teachers who spoke with the inspector were very appreciative of the support and training they receive and spoke of the clear sense of direction established by the senior leaders.

The impact of the additional support provided for pupils is carefully monitored and provision is amended as necessary. However, removal of pupils from class in order to attend additional lessons in mathematics and English means that they do not all have access to the full range of the curriculum.

External support

The school continues to receive strong support from the diocesan local leader of education and from the independent consultants for mathematics and English. The diocesan and local authority representatives are now planning to ensure a more coordinated approach to the support for the school.

Priorities for development

As a matter of urgency, the school should:

- ensure that the additional support provided in English and mathematics does not limit pupils' access to other subjects
- work with the local authority and the police to ensure that parking arrangements outside the school do not pose a risk to the pupils.