

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.gov.uk/ofsted

Direct T 01695 566 855

Direct F 01695 729320

Direct email: gnewton@cfbt.com



30 June 2015

Mrs J Laker
Headteacher
Braithwaite CofE VA Primary School
Braithwaite
Keswick
Cumbria
CA12 5TD

Dear Mrs Laker

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Braithwaite CofE VA Primary School, Cumbria

Following my visit to your school on 29 June 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.

The visit was the first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in March 2015. 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:

- specify how you will evaluate the impact of the actions you are taking to improve pupils' achievement, and the role governors have in evaluating this
- ensure that the activities provided for children to choose from in the early years are stimulating and provide them with opportunities to apply their early writing, reading and mathematical skills
- develop monitoring further to check on pupils' progress and how well work is pitched to pupils' ability.

Evidence

During the inspection, I held meetings with you and the senior teacher, three governors, the school effectiveness officer from the multi-academy trust,

representatives of the parents' forum and pupils from the school council. I had a telephone discussion with the local authority adviser who chairs the strategic improvement meetings. I visited all classrooms during lessons, spoke to pupils about their work and looked at pupils' books from each year group. I looked at school documentation, including your improvement planning and monitoring.

Context

The school is closing at the end of this academic year and re-opening on 1 September 2015 as part of the Good Shepherd Multi-Academy Trust (MAT). A co-Chair of the Governing Body has been appointed to support governors in their move to becoming a Trust Board.

Main findings

You have acted quickly and effectively to tackle the areas for improvement that were identified at the last inspection. Staff and governors are galvanised and determined to secure lasting improvements as rapidly as possible. They have a high level of confidence in your leadership and feel empowered to bring about changes. Improvement planning identifies clearly the responsibilities of staff and governors in leading actions and in checking that the implementation of the plan is progressing as intended. It is not so clear how you will check that actions are having the right impact on pupils' achievement.

Your main focus up to now has been on improving teaching in writing and mathematics. The introduction of a new handwriting policy, together with much clearer guidelines for the presentation of written work, has had a significant impact on pupils' writing. A parent commented that her child's handwriting appeared to 'improve over night'. Pupils are very clear about the expectations that they complete work to the best of their ability at all times. Their books are much better presented; pupils are writing more fluently and for a range of purposes and audiences. The moderated assessments of writing show that the decline has been halted at both Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2.

In mathematics, your main priority is to make sure work is pitched at the right level to maintain challenge and enable all pupils to make the most rapid progress. Teachers are assessing pupils' work more carefully and planning appropriately different challenges in the mixed age classes. However, there are still times when the most able pupils start with the same work as others before going on to extension work. This slows the pace of their learning as they sometimes repeat what they can do already. You are rightly maintaining this priority as a strong focus in your monitoring and planning for further improvement.

During my visits to classrooms, pupils were engaged fully in their work and keen to tell me about what they were doing. As one pupil said, 'teachers are working really hard, and they expect us to work hard too – and that's a good thing!' The new marking policy is having a positive impact, especially on pupils' understanding of

grammar, punctuation and spelling. Pupils say they find the comments about these aspects helpful and easy to follow. However, there are some missed opportunities to help pupils improve the content of their writing or provide more challenge in mathematics.

You are tackling the areas for improvement relating to the early years provision appropriately. Links with an outstanding setting and opportunities for professional development are supporting developments well. The reorganisation of the indoor and outdoor space has improved children's access to different areas of learning. Improved teaching has helped to raise children's achievement and a larger proportion of children reached a good level of development this year. However the activities provided for children to choose from during 'continuous provision' are not always as inspiring as they could be. There are few stimuli to encourage early writing or to enable pupils to solve interesting puzzles and find things out for themselves.

You have sharpened your monitoring procedures and adopted a systematic approach to check the quality of teaching and make sure new policies are being implemented effectively. Staff have raised their expectations of what pupils can achieve and are working hard to bring about improvements. Now that policies are being implemented consistently, there are opportunities to develop your monitoring further to analyse the impact that changes are having on pupils' achievement. For example, you should begin to focus on the progress seen in pupils' books and how well work enables pupils of all ability to make the most rapid progress.

The introduction of the parents' forum is popular with parents and is an effective means to gather their views and engage with them. Parents who met with me are very pleased with the changes being made and feel that you and staff are receptive and approachable. They feel their children are happy, safe and nurtured well.

Governors have a clearer understanding of pupils' achievement across the school, strengths and areas for further development, having increased their monitoring activity in line with improvement planning. They are developing their skills effectively, with support from a National Leader of Governance and through training. The recommended review of governance is taking place at the start of the new academic year following academy conversion, which is appropriate in this circumstance.

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

External support

You are drawing on external support effectively. You quickly established partnership working with an outstanding school and have drawn on the expertise of Local Leaders of Education and a National Leader of Governance. The local cluster and 'triad' arrangements provide a good source of support and challenge and the means

the share effective practice. The local authority 'strategic improvement meetings' provide a useful forum to monitor progress and plan support from the local authority, the diocese and the Good Shepherd MAT. The MAT school effectiveness officer has good knowledge and strengths and areas for development and provides helpful challenge and support.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Cumbria, the Diocese and the Good Shepherd multi-academy trust.

Yours sincerely

Jean Olsson-Law

Her Majesty's Inspector