

Ofsted  
Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231  
Textphone: 0161 618 8524  
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk  
www.ofsted.gov.uk



17 November 2015

Mrs K Brooks  
Upholland Roby Mill CofE Voluntary Aided Primary School  
School Lane  
Roby Mill  
Upholland  
Skelmersdale  
Lancashire  
WN8 0QR

Dear Mrs Brooks

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Upholland Roby Mill CofE VA Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 5 November 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 June 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 in order to become a good school. Further action is needed to:

- Make sure that the governing body is more committed. All governors should attend meetings and training events and contribute to supporting the school and checking the quality of its work. Governors should establish a robust system to check that the school is meeting all of its statutory duties.

### **Evidence**

During the inspection, I held meetings with a small group of governors, two representatives of the local authority and yourself to discuss the actions taken to improve the school since the last inspection. I also met a group of pupils, and spoke to some pupils in class. I read through, and evaluated the school's plans for

improvement, the external reviews into the spending of the pupil premium grant and into the quality of governance.

## **Context**

The previous headteacher retired at the end of August 2015. One of the two teachers left at the end of the summer term. A new teacher, who is seconded from another school, took over teaching in the Key Stage 2 class at the start of September. Consequently, since the start of 2015, there has been a complete change in teaching staff. Five governors have resigned from their positions on the governing body.

## **Main findings**

The headteacher started immediately to tackle the areas for improvement. The plans to improve teaching and the effectiveness of leadership are well on their way.

Pupils I spoke with said that since the new headteacher and teachers have come:

- they are pushed to produce their best work
- teachers are more friendly
- lessons are more fun
- there are more trips and visits, including residential
- they are challenged more because the work is set at the right level for their age and abilities – the teachers have established a culture through which they produce the best quality in their work
- teachers' feedback, including marking, is more helpful because pupils are shown clearly what they need to do to improve their work
- they can get on with their work and concentrate better – they are more respectful to each other and can resolve differences.

Staff, pupils, governors and representatives of the local authority were highly complimentary about the change in culture and ethos in the school. The headteacher has been very effective in improving pupils' behaviour. Adults model how to speak and behave positively and this has helped to improve relationships between pupils but also between staff and pupils. There is a more positive working atmosphere in lessons and around the school.

Parents are now welcomed into the school. They are greeted by the headteacher in the morning and any issues are resolved quickly. They now take part in events such as the spring fayre and attend parents' evenings to find out how much progress their children are making.

The headteacher has set up a new way to assess pupils' learning which enables staff to identify how much progress the children are making in their classes. The system is used to plan pupils' next steps and their next work.

Members of the governing body were quick to secure the services of a national leader in governance to conduct an external review. With the help of the local authority's governors' services, they created a useful plan for improvement and attended some important training which has helped to increase their knowledge and skills. The governors I spoke with have accepted their past failings in holding the previous headteacher and staff to account. Since the inspection, they have increased their level of scrutiny and challenge. They are less accepting of single pieces of evidence and now when they check on the quality of the school, they review a wider range of evidence including pupils' work, external reviews and talking with pupils.

Much of the work, however, is conducted only by a small group of governors. Some governors' poor attendance at meetings has hampered the governing body's ability to fully support and challenge the school. Some, but not all, of the poor attendance is because of illness. Not enough of the governors have attended the recent training events. The Chair of the Governing body has started to take action to remove some inactive or less committed governors and to bring in new members. This has resulted in almost half of the governing body being changed. There is not a robust system in place to check that the school is meeting its legal obligations or to make sure that governors attend training and meetings.

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**

Highly effective support from the local authority has been pivotal in enabling the school to improve quickly. Lancashire's personnel department has taken action to enable Roby Mill's previous teachers to retire and to end their contracts quickly and for new staff to join the school. The finance department has boosted the budget to allow the school to be temporarily over-staffed in order to help move the school to good. The number of pupils is very low and the number of staff is proportionately very high. This level of staffing is not viable for the future so the local authority is working closely with the diocese and with the governors to come up with a long-term plan for the school's future.

The local authority's advisers and consultants have helped to improve provision for the youngest children and, as a result, teaching and the curriculum in the outdoor area have strengthened. They have conducted useful reviews into the impact of the pupil premium funding, the capacity for the school to improve and the quality of health and safety systems. As a result of the reviews, these important aspects of leadership are improving.

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

Yours sincerely

Allan Torr  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**