

Ofsted  
Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

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



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Ms P Adams  
Associate Headteacher  
Crumpsall Lane Primary School  
Crumpsall  
Manchester  
M8 5SR

Dear Ms Adams

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Crumpsall Lane Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 23 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 May 2015. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Senior leaders and governors are not 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:

- urgently act on the recommendations of the external reviews into governance and into the spending of the pupil premium grant (which is a fund of money given to schools to support pupils who are known to be disadvantaged)
- find a more permanent solution to the long-term leadership of the school.

### **Evidence**

During the inspection, I held meetings with the Chair of the Governing Body and a representative of the local authority. I held a discussion with six members of the staff team. I toured the school with you and the associate deputy headteacher. I read through and evaluated the school's plans for improvement.

## **Context**

The headteacher has been absent since the start of September 2015 and is due to retire at the end of December 2015. The deputy headteacher is absent. The school is being led by the headteacher and deputy headteacher from Crab Lane Primary School for four days a week.

## **Main findings**

Although the governors and senior leaders have not taken effective action since the inspection in May 2015, there has been rapid improvement since September 2015.

There has been an external review of governance but the actions have not been agreed by the governing body or put into effect. As a result, improvement to governance has stalled. There was an external review into the spending of the pupil premium at the end of the summer term, but governors have not acted on its findings.

At the previous inspection, the governing body had an inaccurate view of the quality of the work of the school. This, in part, was because of overgenerous external evaluations by the local authority, which were based too heavily on the school's assessment information. Very little was done to improve the accuracy of data or the accuracy of self-evaluation in the summer term. In the autumn term a new system to track pupils' attainment and progress was introduced. It is too early to discern whether the assessment information is more accurate or whether it has improved pupils' progress. Therefore, six months after the inspection, there has been no impact from the improvements to make sure assessment information is more secure. The governing body needs to act with greater urgency if it is to be on course for the school to be judged good at the next inspection.

The long-term leadership of the school is fragile. The current arrangements are working very well and the school's improvement has been rapid since September. However, the lack of a permanent solution to the long-term leadership of the school is a cause for concern. The school and local authority's self-evaluation at the start of the autumn term indicates that in some important areas, such as outcomes for pupils and the effectiveness of leadership, the school has got worse.

In the 2015 summer national tests pupils' reading skills by the end of Year 6 were well below the national average and relatively few made expected progress. The associate headteacher and associate deputy headteacher quickly recognised that English teaching and the leadership of English was a significant concern. They changed the English scheme of work and introduced small-group teaching of reading. They trained staff and their evaluation indicates there has been, since October, an improvement in the teaching of reading. The leadership of English has also changed.

The associate headteacher and deputy headteacher have built the capacity of senior leaders to improve the school. All staff I spoke with confirmed that there is, since September, a better structure to senior and middle leadership. Staff now have teaching commitments and are able to model lessons and work more closely in year group teams. There is a higher level of responsibility and accountability because they have greater control of the teaching in their classes; no longer, for example, do teaching assistants take away large groups of pupils for a large amount of time to teach reading. Teaching assistants no longer cover for teachers for long periods or teach subjects, these are now taught by qualified teachers. Consequently pupils are now receiving the teaching to which they are entitled.

The associate leaders have made changes to timetables and to the books in which pupils work. As a result, all classes are now taught science and there is a higher profile on teaching experiments and investigations. Teachers can now more easily track pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding in each subject. Because many of the changes are recent, there is very little impact yet on improving pupils' outcomes.

The plans for improvement are rightly focused on English in the short term. Standards in mathematics by the end of Year 6 are not high enough and too few pupils make expected and more than expected progress, so there is a need to make sure the plans include improvements to the teaching of mathematics. The plans at the moment do not focus on the Early Years Foundation Stage, yet children's skills and development by the end of Reception dipped in 2015 and too few were ready for Year 1. Senior leaders need to focus quickly on making sure most pupils leave Reception with the skills they need for Year 1.

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**

The headteacher and deputy headteacher from Crab Lane Primary School are providing excellent support. The local authority brokered their services when it became apparent the headteacher was going to be absent for some time. Their impact, in addition to other staff from Crab Lane, has been significant. Senior leaders, governors and the local authority confirmed that staff have a greater voice. Staff are able to shape ideas using their expertise, make suggestions and evaluate the changes that have been introduced to make sure they are right for their pupils. An example of this is the amended policy on feedback and marking which was based strongly on teachers' views. Similarly, changes to the behaviour code were made because of suggestions from staff and an evaluation that the current 'going for green' system was not effective.

The senior leaders described a culture change since September. They said prior to September 'We were made to feel we could not do the job,' but now they feel more involved and trusted. There has been a change from a very hierarchical staff

structure to one where decisions are made collegiately and then followed up to check for consistency.

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

Yours sincerely

Allan Torr

**Her Majesty's Inspector**