

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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



27 October 2015

Mrs Susan Vickerman
Executive Headteacher
Towngate Primary School
Whitley Spring Road
Ossett
West Yorkshire
WF5 0QA

Dear Mrs Vickerman

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Towngate Primary School, Ossett

Following my visit to your school on 29 September 2015, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report on the findings of my visit. 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 April 2015. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. At its previous section 5 inspection in 2012, the school was also judged to require improvement.

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:

- ensure teaching focuses on developing pupils' understanding and that pupils are given work that enables them to think deeply for themselves
- make sure that leaders check on teaching in greater depth and with increased expectations, and ensure that they follow up issues identified with greater urgency
- sharpen improvement plans so that all staff are absolutely clear how success will be achieved and what leaders and governors will see and measure as the school improves.

Evidence

During my visit, I held meetings with you, as executive headteacher, and the head of school. I also held meetings with six members of the governing body, four subject leaders and with a representative of the local authority to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. The school's action plans were evaluated together with some evidence of pupils' progress and attainment. We looked at a small sample of pupils' books during visits to classrooms.

Context

Since the section 5 inspection, the previous headteacher has retired and you and the head of school from Gawthorpe Community Academy have taken on the senior leadership of the school from September 2015. This is initially for one year. One permanent teacher and two temporary teachers left at the end of the summer term. Two new teachers, one of whom is a newly qualified teacher, started at the school in September together with a member of staff who has returned from a period of long-term absence. This means that three quarters of the teachers in Key Stage 2 have changed.

Main findings

Governors and leaders completely agreed the judgement of 'requires improvement' at the last inspection was the correct one. Governors and the local authority have moved swiftly to secure the leadership of the executive headteacher and a head of school from Gawthorpe Community Academy to move the school forward. Senior leaders have quickly grasped the strengths and weaknesses within the school and have set about using partnerships to provide training, coaching and support for teachers and governors.

Joint training and reciprocal visits to Gawthorpe Community Academy have already helped teachers and governors to realise that there is much to do to secure the improvements needed. It has also increased the capacity of leaders; for example the newly qualified teacher has been well supported on her induction through working with the Year 6 teacher in the partnership school. There is a clear programme of training in place and this is tailored to the needs of individual staff. It also includes governors, who have developed partnerships with the governors from Gawthorpe Community Academy to access training and develop their expertise.

Leaders' improvement plans are correctly focused on the most important areas for development, although they are not always clear about how improvements will be achieved or how success will be seen and measured. Governors now receive reports from subject leaders and senior leaders have begun a programme of joint monitoring with subject leaders to check on the quality of teaching. However, these checks do not delve deeply enough into the impact of teaching on pupils' understanding and reveal there is further to go in developing leaders' subject

expertise. Similarly, work in pupils' books confirms that there is more work to do to ensure teachers give pupils work that makes them think deeply enough and builds their understanding securely.

Teachers are keen to move the school forward. Nevertheless, the quality of marking and feedback to pupils is still variable. There is some strong practice, for example in Year 6, where the teacher gives helpful comments to pupils about their writing and ensures that pupils redraft and improve it. However, the scrutiny of pupils' books also showed that teachers do not always spot misconceptions in pupils' understanding and there are still occasions where pupils receive unhelpful comments that do not support them in improving their work.

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

External support

The local authority has an accurate view of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. Officers have brokered the support of a local academy led by a national leader of education who, with the support of the National Support School, has begun to drive changes in the school. The local authority officer and the new senior leaders have supported subject leaders in making checks on the quality of teaching.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Wakefield. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Adrian Guy

Her Majesty's Inspector