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CfBT Inspection Services T 0300 1231231
Suite 22 enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
West Lancs Investment Centre www.ofsted.gov.uk
Maple View
Skelmersdale
WN8 9TG

Direct T 01695 566855
Direct F 01695 729320
gail.hill@cfbt.com
www.cfbt-inspections.com



22 September 2011

Mrs M Beresford
Headteacher
St Margaret's Church of England Primary School
Heys Lane
Heywood
Lancashire
OL10 3RD

Dear Mrs Beresford,

Notice to improve: monitoring inspection of St Margaret's Church of England Primary School

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 21 September 2011, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during the inspection. Discussions with senior leaders and managers, the Chair of the Governing Body, the pupils and local authority officers were also very helpful. Please pass on my thanks to all concerned for the time they gave to talk to me and for the welcome I received.

Since the January 2011 inspection, a member of the senior leadership team has left the school. The leadership team has been re-structured and a new Key Stage 2 leader has taken up post. A new member of teaching staff joined the school at the beginning of the academic year. Four governors have joined the governing body. Two of these members were appointed as additional governors by the local authority and the Diocese.

As a result of the inspection on 19 and 20 January 2011, the school was asked to address the most important areas for improvement which are set out in the annex to this letter. Having considered all the evidence, I am of the opinion that at this time the school is making satisfactory progress in addressing the issues for improvement and in raising the pupils' achievement.

Pupils' achievement improved in 2011. More pupils attained age-related expectations in English, particularly writing, and a greater proportion made expected and sometimes good progress by the end of Year 6. Since the previous inspection, most pupils made accelerated progress in reading, writing and mathematics. As a consequence, gaps in pupils' learning are beginning to close and more pupils are making expected progress from their starting points. Although pupils' progress is improving, unvalidated data and inspection evidence confirm pupils' attainment in English and mathematics remains below the national average. This is because pupils' progress across the school is not consistently strong enough to compensate for their previous underachievement. Pupils enjoy coming to school and display positive

January 2011

PROTECT-INSPECTION



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attitudes to learning. This is reflected in their attendance levels which are steadily improving.

Pupils' achievement in writing has improved. This is because a whole-school strategy for developing basic skills and promoting pupils' writing has been established and is being consistently applied. Consequently, pupils now have the opportunity to learn and practise punctuation and grammar skills in a more systematic manner. Pupils are regularly using their writing skills across a range of subjects so the quality and quantity of their written work is improving. Nonetheless, some pupils, particularly those higher up in the school, still have considerable gaps in their writing and spelling skills which is preventing them from attaining age-related expectations.

Although relatively new to their posts, the subject leaders for reading and writing have quickly grasped the key barriers to pupils' achievement in English. As a result, they have introduced whole-school targets and teaching strategies to develop pupils' use of grammar, spelling and punctuation. In addition, they have implemented class novels and Reading Journals which encourage pupils to study and appreciate literature. Subject leaders have been involved in monitoring the impact of these strategies through scrutiny of teachers' planning and pupils' books. Although these monitoring activities are helping them to understand what further steps need to be taken, they do not happen on a regular enough basis to ensure that all pupils make consistently good progress.

As a result of good quality professional development, including the opportunity for teachers to share their expertise, teaching is improving. Teachers' planning is of better quality because it takes account of pupils' prior learning and considers the needs of most groups. Good developments to the curriculum mean teachers provide exciting activities which spark pupils' enthusiasm while allowing them to practise their basic skills in a variety of contexts. Nevertheless, teaching is not consistently good enough to ensure all pupils make accelerated progress. In the best lessons, teachers re-shape explanations so that all pupils are confident and work at a good pace. Every opportunity to consolidate prior learning is taken and pupils are able to work independently for sustained periods of time. Teaching is less effective when explanations are too long or when teacher expectations of what pupils can achieve are not high enough. Pupils appreciate the improvements to teaching. They say learning is more fun, there are more opportunities for investigative work and they enjoy being able to write for longer periods of time.

Determined leadership by the headteacher and deputy headteacher have enabled the school to focus on the major shortcomings identified in the previous inspection report. The system to track and monitor the progress made by individual pupils is much improved and has led to greater whole-school accountability for pupils' achievement. The monitoring of teaching is securing improvements because it accurately identifies strengths and weaknesses. However, this is not sufficiently rigorous enough to address remaining inconsistencies and secure greater gains in pupils' achievement.

The local authority's statement of action has been evaluated and it meets requirements. The support provided by the local authority has been concerted and effective. Local authority officers have delivered whole-school and targeted individual support to improve the school's provision for writing and to raise the quality of teaching. In addition, local authority guidance has supported senior leaders and managers in establishing stronger systems for monitoring the work of the school. The school has also benefitted from support provided by the Diocese. Effective governor training has enabled members of the governing body to offer a greater level of support and challenge.

I hope you have found this visit helpful in promoting improvement in your school. This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Miss Joanne Olsson
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place on 19 and 20 January 2011

- Improve the consistency of pupils' attainment and progress in writing by:
 - implementing a more structure approach to the teaching of writing
 - ensuring that all pupils, particularly those lower down I the school, improve their skills in punctuation and sentence structure
 - ensuring that all pupils are given a wide range of opportunities to apply their writing skills
 - giving more attention to the management of writing especially in evaluating the impact of changes and making adjustments to provision.

- Improve the quality of teaching to be consistently good across the school by:
 - sharing the good practice that is evident in Year 4 to Year 6
 - ensuring that teaching builds securely on pupils' prior learning
 - providing pupils with sufficient opportunities to apply their learning through independent investigations
 - ensuring that planning consistently meets the needs of all pupils.