

CfBT Inspection Services
Suite 22
West Lancs Investment Centre
Maple View
Skelmersdale
WN8 9TG

T 0300 1231231
Text Phone: 0161 6188524
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk

Direct T 01695 566 937
Direct F 01695 729320
Direct email:
jsimmons@cfbt.com



10 December 2012

Mrs Jackie Young
Headteacher
St Stephen's Church of England Primary School
Robinson Street
Blackburn
Lancashire
BB1 5PE

Dear Mrs Young

Special measures: monitoring inspection of St Stephen's Church of England Primary School

Following my visit with Doreen Davenport, Additional Inspector, to your school on 6 and 7 December 2012, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings.

The inspection was the fifth monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in November 2010. The full list of the areas for improvement which were identified during that inspection is set out in the annex to this letter. The monitoring inspection report is attached and the main judgements are set out below.

Progress since being subject to special measures – satisfactory

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – good

No more than two newly qualified teachers may be appointed on the following conditions:

- that they are supported by a teacher mentor who can exemplify the good practice required to promote pupils' accelerated progress
- that the school ensures there is frequent monitoring of the quality and impact of teaching and has strategies to intervene immediately should this fall below the standard required to improve pupils' outcomes.

This letter and monitoring inspection report will be posted on the Ofsted website. I am copying this letter and the monitoring inspection report to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services, Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council.

January 2012



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

Yours sincerely

Adrian Guy

Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in November 2010

- Raise pupils' attainment and accelerate their progress by:
 - ensuring that all teachers use assessment effectively to plan learning for pupils of all ability levels in Key Stage 2
 - providing higher levels of challenge for more-able pupils throughout the school
 - ensuring opportunities for pupils to contribute to their learning by developing their speaking and listening skills
 - maximising the effectiveness of teaching assistants by extending current good practice more widely.

- Ensure leaders drive school improvement with a greater sense of urgency by:
 - using more accurate benchmarks for measuring pupils' outcomes in order to evaluate the school's performance
 - identifying sharp and measurable success criteria for school development within tighter timescales
 - providing training for members of the governing body so that their responsibilities can be fully and effectively implemented.

Special measures: monitoring of St Stephen's Church of England Primary School

Report from the fifth monitoring inspection on 6 and 7 December 2012

Evidence

Inspectors observed teaching and learning in each of the classes in the school. Some observations were conducted jointly with the headteacher and the deputy headteacher. Inspectors listened to some pupils read and looked at the work in pupils' books. Meetings were held with school leaders, members of the governing body and a representative from the local authority.

Context

Since the previous visit there have been significant changes in staffing. In September, nine new members of teaching staff joined the school including an assistant headteacher and two newly qualified teachers. Currently, one member of staff is on long-term absence and this post is being covered by a temporary teacher. The school has appointed new leaders to take responsibility for mathematics, English, the Early Years Foundation Stage and special educational needs.

Achievement of pupils at the school

Pupils' levels of attainment at the end of the summer term improved. Tests for pupils in Year 2 and Year 6 showed increases in the proportion of pupils achieving the national expectation for their age. Although attainment in reading for Year 2 pupils and the achievement of more-able pupils has not yet shown similar improvement, nonetheless this represents clear progress on their previous levels of achievement. Information about the current attainment and progress of pupils in other year groups shows an increasing proportion are making expected progress and making up for previous underperformance. In more effective lessons, inspectors observed groups of more-able pupils getting on quickly with their learning, often supported by a teaching assistant rather than having to wait for the teacher to explain activities to the whole class. This helped them to make better progress. In their reading, pupils are developing their understanding of phonics (letters and the sounds they make). However, their understanding of the stories and the meaning behind the words they read is less secure. Leaders are aware of this and have purchased new reading resources to develop pupils' comprehension skills. Information about the progress of pupils with special educational needs shows that, like their peers, their achievement is improving, although there is some variation between different year groups and subjects.

Progress since the last monitoring inspection on the areas for improvement:

- raise pupils' attainment and accelerate their progress – good

The quality of teaching

Around half of the classes in the school have new teachers. They have settled in quickly and lessons are characterised by calm working atmospheres and pupils who cooperate well and are keen to learn. Where teaching is most improved:

- teachers' explanations are clearer and pupils understand what they are expected to learn
- better marking identifies where pupils have succeeded and what they need to improve
- activities are more accurately planned at the right level help to challenge pupils
- teaching assistants are better deployed and make a positive contribution to pupils' progress
- better links with other subjects and aspects are built into learning and speaking and listening make a positive contribution to learning.

The proportion of good teaching is increasing and some outstanding practice is emerging. However, leaders acknowledge that there is more to do in ensuring that all teachers plan for and explain clearly what pupils are to understand in lessons rather than what they will do. Marking has improved across the school, although there is still some weaker practice which does not help pupils to improve their work and make better progress. Although there is some better practice, the use of teaching assistants across the school remains variable. In the Reception classes, a new team of teachers is aware of children's skills and abilities when they enter school. They are also aware of the need to focus on children's spoken English. Although there are some positive opportunities to develop this, there are also missed opportunities where adults either talk too much or do not intervene in children's play and extend their speaking and understanding.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils' behaviour in lessons and around school continues to make a positive contribution to their learning and the atmosphere of the school. They cooperate well together and are keen to help each other in lessons. Pupils' levels of attendance are better than those seen previously and current attendance is above the national average. This includes pupils who are supported by the additional pupil premium funding from the government. Teachers and leaders ensure that checks are kept on bullying. They have asked Year 6 pupils and the school council about behaviour and about bullying, although this has not yet been extended to survey the views of all pupils in the school. Records show that incidents of behaviour are logged, however, there is more to do to ensure that all forms of bullying are checked in line with the school's 'Respects for All' policy.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

The headteacher and governors have been successful in appointing a significant number of new staff to the school. They have communicated a clearer understanding of the school's

expectations and the drive to improve. Consequently, leaders show a better understanding about the priorities for improvement in their areas of responsibility and have a more accurate grasp of the attainment and progress of pupils. Together with senior leaders this has contributed to a shared sense of urgency and ambition and an increased emphasis on checking that agreed actions are being followed up in the classroom. This has led to improvements in marking and greater accountability for teachers. Information about pupils' achievement is increasingly secure and has been moderated with the local authority. This has enabled leaders and others to identify and target underperformance clearly. There is increasing clarity in the leaders' evaluations and plans for improvement, however, there is still further work needed to align these to enable senior leaders and governors to tell exactly how much improvement has taken place and how much more is needed.

Support for teachers in the form of coaching and mentoring and some strong appointments have led to improvements in the quality of teaching. Successful teaching has been rewarded through pay progression which is scrutinised by members of the governing body. Where teaching is not improving quickly enough there is evidence that a more robust approach is being taken. Leaders are aware of the developments needed within the curriculum including securing teachers' subject knowledge about the step-by-step progression in the skills and understanding to be taught in mathematics and deepening pupils' understanding about the use of English.

New staff have been carefully checked to ensure they meet safeguarding requirements for working with children. Governors continue to access training to support them in their role. This has included safer recruitment training which has supported the recruitment of new staff and a review of the faith based aspects of the school's ethos to support further improvement.

Progress since the last monitoring inspection on the areas for improvement:

- ensure leaders drive school improvement with a greater sense of urgency – good

External support

The local authority continues to check the progress of the school and holds regular meetings with leaders and governors which provide a clear picture of the progress the school is making. The levels of support from external consultants are decreasing and the school is identifying and finding its own support to address the priorities it is identifying. The school improvement officer visits the school regularly and is ensuring the newly qualified teachers receive appropriate support.