

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 566855
Direct F 01695 729320
Direct email:
gail.hill@cfbt.com



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Mrs Gillian Roberts
Headteacher
High Crag Primary School
Crag Road
Shipley
West Yorkshire
BD18 2ES

Dear Mrs Roberts

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to High Crag Primary School, Bradford

Following my visit to your school on 30 September 2013, 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 June 2013. 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. The school should take further action to:

- Revise the action plan to incorporate monitoring activities by governors, so that they can check the accuracy of the information provided by senior leaders and offer the challenge needed.
- Review the policy and procedure for home reading records. Written comments by staff need to be more specific. They need to detail what pupils can do and what they need to do to improve their reading.
- Continue with the plans for regular focused monitoring by senior leaders to ensure that all inconsistencies in teaching and learning are addressed within the planned timescale.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you, other senior and middle leaders, the Governing Body and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The school action plan was evaluated. We visited lessons, spoke with pupils and looked at their work.

Context

Two newly qualified teachers have been appointed, one full-time and one part-time. Several support staff have been appointed as part of the school's strategic plan to target individuals and groups.

Main findings

The school's action plan is precise. It sets out what needs to be done, by whom and when. However, it does not involve governors sufficiently in monitoring activities, so that they can make the necessary checks on how well the school is doing. Leaders are usefully highlighting progress with the actions against measurable outcomes.

Leaders have continued with their plans to increase staffing to support the necessary improvements. This has included moving staff and changing some job roles to allow for more focused teaching and interventions. There has been some reorganisation of the leadership team. For example, the headteacher has split the literacy lead role between two staff, in order to focus on the improvements needed in each key stage. The appointment of a new curriculum lead is helping the school to develop the use of creativity in the curriculum and to make purposeful links between subjects. There are increasing opportunities for staff to work and plan together and share good practice.

Leaders say that the inspection has sharpened their focus. Consequently, they are following up, and evaluating actions, with more rigour, such as making repeated and regular focused checks on teaching and learning. They are supporting middle leaders to do the same. Half-termly pupils' progress meetings have been timetabled in order to hold staff to account and address underachievement more rapidly than before.

Following the inspection, leaders focused immediately on improving the teaching of phonics. Pupils have been assessed and put into phase groups in Years 1 to 3 and have been working in these groups since the start of term. There is flexibility to move pupils to ensure they are accessing the appropriate phonic phase. Leaders plan to extend phonics teaching into Key Stage 2 to address the gaps in pupil's ability to decode unfamiliar words and spell accurately. Phonic and spelling displays have a high profile in classrooms. Teaching staff have had training to deliver the phonics programme and there are plans to extend this training to support staff. Leaders recognise the need to increase opportunities for pupils to read more and practise using their phonic skills. During visits to classrooms, I noted that there are inconsistencies in pupils' home-school reading records. Comments congratulate pupils but do not specify what they do well or what they need to work on to improve their reading. The school has introduced a new marking and feedback policy. I was able to see this being used to good effect in some classes but not in all. This was also the case with the introduction of working walls. In some classes, pupils knew that the wall showed and supported their learning.

When discussing with staff how they plan for pupils' different learning needs, they explained that the school had moved to setting and targeting pupils in maths in Key Stage 2 and similarly, in English in Years 5 and 6. However, they were not able to explain how they plan for individual learning needs using prior learning and daily assessment. Senior leaders have plans to support staff with planning next steps in pupils' learning. They recognise that this approach needs embedding in practice if pupils are to make faster progress and close gaps

in their prior learning.

Middle leaders are sharpening their skills with well-planned training and support from senior leaders and the local authority. They know what they need to do. They are able to share good examples of their own practice and need to consider how best to share it with others. Although they have regular meetings individually with senior leaders, they say there is value in them meeting collectively to ensure the team works cohesively and speedily to drive forward all the improvements necessary.

Governors know the school well and are clear about what needs to be done. They are keen to sharpen their monitoring skills by making regular checks on the school's work and using data to ask probing questions about pupil progress.

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 school. Its support has been timely and appropriate. It has brokered support from a literacy consultant to work on developing the teaching of phonics throughout school and a maths consultant to work with staff on developing and using intervention strategies to address gaps in learning. The school is part of a school's partnership. This has supported it in securing accurate assessment. It is helping middle leaders to develop in their roles through networking opportunities.

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

Yours sincerely

Anne Bowyer

Her Majesty's Inspector