

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](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

**Direct T** 01695 566862  
**Direct F** 01695 729320  
**Direct email:**  
rcowley@cfbt.com



28 March 2014

Mrs Michelle Foster  
Acting Headteacher  
St Helen's Primary Academy  
St Helen's Way  
Monk Bretton  
Barnsley  
South Yorkshire  
S71 2PS

Dear Mrs Foster

**Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to St Helen's Primary Academy, Barnsley**

Following my visit to your academy on 27 March 2014, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report on the 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 academy since the most recent section 5 inspection.

The visit was the first monitoring inspection since the academy was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in December 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 academy should take further action to:

- make sure sufficient challenge is provided for the most able to allow them to reach the highest levels
- embed the new policies so they are used consistently across the academy
- consider ways in which governors collect and record first- hand evidence of the impact of actions taken to improve the academy.

**Evidence**

During the visit, meetings were held with the acting headteacher, other senior leaders, the Chair of the Governing Body and a representative of the sponsor to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The academy action plan and other documents provided by the academy were evaluated. The acting headteacher took HMI on a tour of the academy.

## **Context**

The headteacher retired in February 2014. The deputy headteacher is currently the acting headteacher. There are three new governors.

## **Main findings**

The new acting headteacher has transformed the climate in the academy. She has empowered leaders and encouraged staff to work with her as a team. The learning environment has been revitalised. The action plan to address areas for improvement identifies clear milestones for pupil attainment, key actions, who is leading the actions and how they will be monitored.

An effective system for tracking and recording pupils' progress has been established. The acting headteacher has a good understanding of where the strengths and weaknesses in pupils' attainment and progress lie. Teachers are becoming increasingly proficient at recording and analysing data for their classes. They say they now have ownership of the data. Progress meetings are held between the class teachers and the acting headteacher after each data collection to identify which pupils need extra help to make good progress.

Teachers are beginning to make good use of the data to plan lessons that meet the needs of different groups of pupils. They need to ensure that appropriate challenge is provided for the most able so they can reach the highest levels.

Teaching and learning are improving as a result of a programme of professional development and individual programmes to support and challenge those whose practice is not yet good. Consultants from the sponsor are contributing effectively to these programmes to improve literacy and numeracy alongside the academy's strong senior leaders. Training has focussed on planning, questioning and activities to boost the progress of different groups of pupils in the classroom. Teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage has been improved through the use of discrete taught sessions which are having a positive impact on children's writing, phonics and mathematics.

Marking and feedback have improved. There is a new policy which is starting to be used effectively to provide pupils with next steps to improve their work and opportunities to respond to this feedback. The senior leaders are checking that the policy is being implemented and sharing areas for development with individual members of staff. This policy needs to be embedded and used consistently.

There has been a focus on reading. A new reading programme and new books have resulted in a dramatic impact on pupils' enjoyment of reading as well as their reading ages. This supports improvements in the daily guided reading sessions led by teachers. A focus on numeracy is increasing problem solving and thinking skills activities. There is a new calculations policy devised by staff. Calculation methods have recently been shared with parents at very successful maths and breakfast mornings. Writing is being improved through more regular opportunities to complete extended writing.

Performance management will become more rigorous with the inclusion of numerical pupil progress targets for teachers following the next round of performance management lesson observations.

There has been a review of governance and an action plan written to address the findings. The Chair of the Governing Body is undertaking training through the National College and is working with the Chairs of two other local academies with the same sponsor. A training programme for governors has been devised for this group of academies. The governors will monitor the impact of actions taken to address the areas for improvement at full governing body meetings. Some first-hand evidence is already collected by governors through meetings with the acting headteacher and learning walks of the academy. This evidence needs to be recorded. The additional governors are starting to increase the representation of the wider community on the governing body. The website has been improved.

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

### **External support**

The academy makes good use of the strong support provided by the sponsor for the acting headteacher and the development of literacy, numeracy, data tracking and teaching and learning.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Barnsley and the Department for Education Academies Advisers Unit.

Yours sincerely

Helen Lane

**Her Majesty's Inspector**