

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 566863  
**Direct F** 01695 729320  
**Direct email:**  
jbennett@cfbt.com



10 June 2014

Mrs Gill Evans  
Headteacher  
Holcombe Brook Primary School  
Longsight Road  
Holcombe Brook  
Bury  
Lancashire  
BL0 9TA

Dear Mrs Evans

**Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Holcombe Brook Primary School, Bury**

Following my visit to your school on 9 June 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 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 March 2014. 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:

- make minor adjustments to its 'post-Ofsted improvement plan' to ensure that all actions have readily measurable targets which focus sharply on the achievement of key groups of pupils, especially the most able
- increase the proportions of pupils who exceed expected levels of progress
- ensure that the small amount of teaching that requires improvement quickly becomes good or outstanding.

## **Evidence**

During the inspection, meetings were held with you, other senior leaders, the Chair and representatives of the Governing Body and an officer of the local authority (LA) to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The school's 'post-Ofsted improvement plan' was evaluated. A range of documentation was scrutinised, for example the school's records related to checking the quality of teaching, pupils' achievement and performance management. In addition, a sample of pupils' written work was seen. A brief visit was made to most classes to check on the quality of teaching and learning.

## **Context**

No new staff have been appointed since the most recent section 5 inspection. There has, however, been a restructuring of staff roles and responsibilities to ensure that all are deployed in areas of the school's work where they can operate most effectively.

## **Main findings**

In the short time since the last inspection, you, your senior leaders and governors have worked at a rapid pace and with considerable success to begin to tackle the recommendations for improvement. You have put in place a very clear and coherent new teaching and learning policy which sets out very precisely your expectations of teaching staff and how they can meet them. Your already rigorous systems for monitoring the quality of teaching and learning and for performance management have been further strengthened.

Every teacher is now building a very objective individual portfolio of their developing performance, together with a record of the school's work to help them improve it further. Your own monitoring records indicate that this has resulted in significant improvement of the quality of teaching and learning, for example, in teachers' deeper questioning skills and in improved consistency in marking. You are working hard to ensure that the small amount of teaching that is not yet good or outstanding quickly becomes at least good. Pupils' attitudes to learning, seen during the inspection, are very positive although there is more work to be done in inspiring the most able to achieve as well as they can in all their subjects.

The impact of your determined drive to improve teaching and learning is seen in your own detailed and thorough assessment information, which shows that pupils in Year 6 are set to improve their performance in most, if not all measures in the 2014 tests, compared to 2013. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are maintaining their positive outcomes. Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 pupils are showing improvement in writing, but more needs to be done to ensure that all pupils achieve as well as they can in reading and mathematics. At Key Stage 2 rates of expected progress are improving in all subjects and in writing, more pupils are exceeding expected progress than was the case last year. There is more work to be done in making sure pupils reach the higher levels in reading and mathematics.

In terms of key groups of pupils, the gap in achievement between those pupils supported by the pupil premium and other pupils is poised to narrow further this year. Some of these pupils are now achieving better in reading than their peers. Those pupils who have a disability or special educational needs, and are supported by school action or a statement, are progressing well. Those who are supported by school action are also improving.

You recognise that the achievement of the most able pupils continues to be a priority for the school. You have strengthened your systems for identifying these pupils and have begun to map across the curriculum the quality of the learning experiences provided for this group. It is as yet too early to judge the effectiveness of these steps. The key to real improvement in the achievement of the most able pupils is likely to be found in ensuring that they experience more teaching that is consistently outstanding in the way that it meets their particular needs.

You and the senior leaders have now begun to establish a cohesive 'post-Ofsted improvement plan' that is fit for purpose because it has the capacity to drive the school's improvement quickly up to the next Section 5 inspection. The plan is well focused on actions capable of raising pupils' achievement. However the final document will need to ensure that the impact of planning on the achievement of all key groups of pupils, for example, the most able, is visible throughout the document, in order to help drive improvement at an appropriate pace for this group of pupils.

Governors whom I met during my visit have taken a very open and honest approach to the findings of the last inspection. They are knowledgeable and committed to the school's improvement and they are well informed about pupils' achievement. Inspection evidence shows that members are very confident to ask challenging questions of the school's leaders and managers and are unafraid to support hard staffing decisions when necessary. They are determined to play a very active role in ensuring that the school becomes good as quickly as possible and have engaged well with the external review of their practice that they have commissioned.

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 school's relationship with the LA is very positive. The LA has provided a range of effective support for the school's improvement, including in improvement planning, the improvement of teaching and the development of leadership and management skills of senior leaders and other teachers, to build the school's capacity. The school also draws on training from the LA's Governor Services and from a range of other consultants as necessary.

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

Yours sincerely

Susan Wareing

**Her Majesty's Inspector**

The letter should be copied to the following:

- Appropriate authority - Chair of the Governing Body
- Local authority