

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 566933  
**Direct F** 01695 729320  
**Direct email:**  
ggleaden@cfbt.com



27 June 2014

Mrs Michaela Underwood  
Headteacher  
Great Marsden St John's Church of England Primary School  
Trent Road  
Nelson  
Lancashire  
BB9 0NX

Dear Mrs Underwood

**Special measures monitoring inspection of Great Marsden St John's Church of England Primary School**

Following my visit to your school with Peter Marsh, Additional Inspector, on 25 and 26 June 2014, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave during the inspection and for the time you made available to discuss the actions which have been taken since the school's previous monitoring inspection.

The inspection was the second monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in November 2013. 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.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time:

The school is making reasonable progress towards the removal of special measures.

The school may not appoint newly qualified teachers before the next monitoring inspection.

This letter and monitoring inspection report will be published 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, the Anglican Diocese of Blackburn and the Interim Executive Director for Children & Young People for Lancashire.

Yours sincerely

Mark Williams

**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## Annex

### The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in November 2013

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is all at least good by:
  - providing staff with opportunities to observe high-quality teaching so they recognise what constitutes good and outstanding teaching
  - making sure teachers apply the advice they receive on how to improve the quality of their own teaching
  - matching learning tasks more effectively to pupils' wide-ranging abilities
  - teachers using day-to-day assessment to adapt their teaching to the changing needs of pupils in lessons
  - eradicating low-level disruption by making sure that pupils are more actively engaged and interested in lessons
  - improving the marking of pupils' work so that it informs pupils about how to improve their work and then allowing pupils time to respond to this guidance.
  
- Accelerate rates of progress in all subjects, particularly in mathematics, so that the achievement of pupils of all abilities is at least good by:
  - improving pupils' numeracy skills to ensure they have a secure base for further learning and providing opportunities for pupils to apply these skills to real-life situations and in subjects other than numeracy
  - improving standards in reading by strengthening younger pupils' knowledge of phonics (letters and the sounds they make)
  - increasing opportunities for pupils to read more widely.
  
- Improve leadership and management at all levels, including governance, so that there is a greater collective capacity to improve the effectiveness of the school by:
  - ensuring action plans have a sharp focus on improvement and are evaluated regularly
  - implementing fully the appraisal of individual teacher's performance so they are held rigorously to account to ensure all pupils make progress that is at least good
  - developing the skills of subject leaders in checking the quality of teaching and learning in their subjects so they can provide helpful feedback to teachers and then ensure that teachers make effective use of this advice
  - updating regularly the newly introduced tracking system so prompt action can be taken to support pupils who are in danger of underachieving
  - increasing governors' involvement in checking the school's performance so they can identify strengths and areas for development, have a clear and realistic understanding of school effectiveness and are able to hold teachers to account
  - undertaking an external review of governance, to include a specific focus on the school's use of the pupil premium, in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and governance may be improved.

## **Report on the second monitoring inspection on 25 to 26 June 2014.**

### **Evidence**

Inspectors observed the school's work. They visited every class to observe teaching and learning and to look at work in pupils' books. On three such visits inspectors were accompanied by the headteacher. Inspectors scrutinised a range of documentation, including that relating to pupils' progress, the monitoring records of leaders, governance and behaviour and safety. Meetings were held with the headteacher, the school's leadership team, the teacher seconded to the school, the executive headteacher and representatives of the local authority and diocese. In addition, inspectors met with 19 pupils, including 12 members of the school council, and had a telephone conversation with the Chair of the Governing Body.

### **Context**

There have been a number of staffing changes since the February 2014 monitoring inspection. In consultation with school leaders, the local authority seconded an assistant headteacher from a neighbouring school to teach pupils in Year 2 following the resignation of that class's usual teacher in April 2014. Owing to staff leaving or sickness, changes have been made in recent weeks to teachers in Years 1, 5 and 6.

### **Achievement of pupils at the school**

All groups of pupils are making better progress in their learning since the inspection of November 2013, although, apart from in mathematics, these rates vary from class to class. As a result, standards are rising. In Year 1, for example, because of targeted interventions and the focus of the leader of English, there has been an improvement in the proportion of pupils attaining expected levels in phonics (letters and the sounds they make). In addition, there has been a 20 percentage point rise in the number gaining the expected Level 2 in reading by the end of Year 2. In mathematics, the figure has also improved and is 10 percentage points higher than in 2013. Furthermore, initial indications point to a rise in the proportion of pupils at the end of Year 6 gaining the expected Level 4 in reading, writing and mathematics. Owing to the legacy of underachievement, though, this figure is unlikely to reach government-set floor standards.

Despite the improved progress, attainment in writing is not as strong as in reading and mathematics. Likewise, the percentage of pupils attaining the higher levels is expected to be lower than in 2013. Challenge for the more able pupils remains a priority for leaders.

Work in pupils' books reflects the improved progress but also variability in standards attained. Pupils' writing, while containing interesting ideas and vocabulary, is generally weak in terms of correct use of spelling, grammar and punctuation. This is particularly the case in Years 5 and 6 where the legacy of underachievement is most keenly felt. In mathematics, pupils' work shows they do not always have the opportunity to rectify misunderstandings. This limits the progress pupils make in this subject.

## **The quality of teaching**

The quality of teaching is improving, although in some classes changes in staffing have limited the progress made by pupils. Where learning is best, in lessons observed and over time, a number of features are routinely evident. These include: good quality questioning and prompting that allows pupils to work together to find answers and make good progress in their learning; practical learning that engages the interest of pupils; clear expectations of what pupils are to do and learn; and opportunities to apply writing skills across the curriculum.

Also improving is the quality of teachers' marking. As a result of clear guidance from the headteacher, marking routinely makes clear strengths in learning and the next steps pupils should take to improve. In addition, teachers are increasingly setting challenges for pupils to complete in 'fix it time' at the beginning of lessons. However, these improvements are not always having the desired impact. This is because, despite writing the comments and challenges, teachers are not routinely ensuring pupils respond. On occasions, when pupils do respond, teachers do not acknowledge the corrections or improvements made. This has the effect of limiting progress.

Overall, teachers' assessment of pupils' achievement in reading and writing is secure and, as a result, skills learned previously are built on. In mathematics, however, the view of the progress pupils make in their learning is less clear. This is because of the way mathematics teaching is organised. Pupils move quickly from topic to topic. This means there is not always time to deal with any misunderstandings that may arise. Furthermore, the sequence of teaching mathematical knowledge and skills, thereby securing understanding, is not always logical. For example, the multiplication of two digit numbers by two digit numbers is taught before pupils understand how to calculate two digit numbers multiplied by a one digit number.

## **Behaviour and safety of pupils**

Pupils during this monitoring inspection were polite, well mannered and biddable. Pupils, in discussions, were confident that behaviour is improving and they were kept safe. They played well with each other at break and lunchtimes. Attendance continues to rise and is higher compared to this time last year. Pupils report the rewards for attending well, 'fivers' for example, are a good incentive. Where incidents do occur, these are logged. However, leaders recognise the need to analyse these logs to ascertain whether or not any patterns are occurring.

## **The quality of leadership in and management of the school**

In her short time at the Great Marsden St John's, the headteacher has established a clear way forward for the school to improve. She has not shirked away from making difficult decisions. She and the inclusion leader, for example, have taken firm action to improve teaching quality. These include setting out non-negotiables in terms of marking and feedback to pupils and the expectation that targets are made clear for pupils with special educational needs. However, because checks to see these non-negotiables have not been as frequent as they ought, while marking takes place and next steps identified well, teachers are not routinely ensuring pupils respond with corrections or that they complete challenges set.

The school's organisation of its records of monitoring and evaluation improved during the course of this inspection. They, including those in English and mathematics, now have a clear sequence of actions taken and impact gained. Owing to the correct decisions of the headteacher, the number of responsibilities of leaders on the leadership team has been reduced since the February monitoring inspection to allow some members to focus on their own teaching. The impact of this has been to place more responsibility onto the shoulders of the headteacher. As teaching quality has improved and the skills of the wider leadership team grown, the capacity of leaders to hold each other and staff to account for the learning of pupils has begun to improve. Pupil progress meetings, for example, highlight learning made by pupils and groups of pupils thereby ensuring gaps are beginning to close.

Governors continue to hold leaders to account increasingly well. Following an external review of governance in February, positions of responsibility, links to subjects for example, are, in July 2014, about to be redesignated according to skills and expertise. Two new additions to the governing body, coupled with the keen knowledge of current members of the strengths of the school and areas to develop, are increasing its capacity well.

### **External support**

The local authority, diocese and executive headteacher continue to provide good support and challenge to the headteacher and school leaders. The seconded assistant headteacher has, for example, assisted the school in preparing for the revised National Curriculum to be introduced in September 2014. Observations of teaching and learning carried out by senior leaders and representatives of the local authority are confirming the increased accuracy of judgements made by school leaders. The diocese is supporting the school through learning conversations with pupils in Year 5. Already, this is presenting leaders with another view of how pupils see their learning in mathematics, thereby helping leaders to review how the subject can be taught. The executive headteacher's advice, challenge and support have proved to be invaluable in helping the headteacher make the important and correct decisions which are pushing this school forward.