

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

T 0300 123 1231  
Text Phone: 0161 6188524  
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk  
[www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

**Direct T** 01695 566939  
**Direct F** 01695 729320  
**Direct email:** glankertis@cfbt.com



17 July 2014

Mr Neil Garrett  
Acting Headteacher  
Elworth CofE Primary School  
School Lane  
Elworth  
Sandbach  
Cheshire  
CW11 3HU

Dear Mr Garrett

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Elworth CofE Primary School, Cheshire East**

Following my visit to your school on 16 July 2014, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection 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 April 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:

- as a matter of urgency, appoint a substantive headteacher in order to ensure that management of the school is secure and in a position to demonstrate that it can become a good school
- review the action plan to ensure that clear strategies are identified, where appropriate, which focus on simple, but specific, ways in which classroom teaching and learning can be developed and improved
- implement a strategy to develop middle leaders so they can support teachers to build up their confidence and subject knowledge in order to enable them to deliver quality lessons across a full range of subjects
- seek professional advice and training to enable teachers to acquire practical strategies which will challenge more able pupils in lessons

- build specific targets, linked to improving subject knowledge and pedagogy, into performance management objectives.

## **Evidence**

During the inspection, meetings were held with yourself, the Chair of the Governing Body and two other governors as well as a group of pupils from Year 4. A meeting was also held with the local authority adviser to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection and the level of support being provided. The schools' development plan was evaluated. In addition, a learning walk, with you focussed on the learning environment around the school.

## **Context**

The school has been without a substantive headteacher for a year and no new appointment has been made. The temporary acting headteacher continues in post in the interim. The executive headteacher is no longer involved in the management of the school. Two teachers have been promoted to assistant headteachers from September to develop monitoring and the curriculum. Staffing is stable. The governing body has been re-constituted with a smaller number of governors now linked to the school.

## **Main findings**

The post-inspection action plan addresses the key issues identified during the recent inspection. The strategies to support improving governance are clear and linked to a comprehensive programme of support and training. There are also clear procedures being established to improve monitoring of teaching as well as pupil progress. In addition, performance management systems have been established in readiness for the next academic year. There is a strong emphasis on monitoring but few actions identified specifically with improving classroom practice. Milestones tend to focus more on monitoring actions rather than being linked to improved outcomes for pupils. Improved monitoring will better identify gaps in provision and weaknesses in classroom practice but, on its own, will not develop teachers' skills and expertise. The plan needs to be developed to include simple, yet effective actions, which will have a direct impact in the classroom and will raise achievement. For example, ensuring that, as a matter of policy, pupils have easy access to and are expected to use dictionaries and thesauruses on a day to day basis to improve spelling and widen vocabulary. The plan also fails to address the requirement to raise challenge for the more able pupils through lessons and the curriculum. It focuses instead on improving monitoring to increase the number of pupils who can be identified as being more able. Monitoring, in itself, does not meet the needs of these pupils who are expected to receive more challenge in lessons.

Pupils who were interviewed were very positive about the school but had noticed little change in classroom practice apart from the fact that 'teachers were now a lot

stricter'. As a result, they considered that behaviour had further improved. They felt that lessons were not easy but neither were they difficult, although some aspects were being covered in greater depth. Not all the work was considered to be interesting. During the walk around the school it was clear that pupils have positive attitudes to learning and would benefit from more interesting and challenging work. Middle leadership is currently under development. There is now a clearer expectation that middle leaders will improve teaching and learning and manage their area of responsibility more effectively. Since the inspection, governance has been re-organised and management structures, which were previously lacking, are now established and the school is better placed to improve. There is currently a need for impact to become more evident both in improvements in the classroom, but also in increased challenge for pupils. Streaming has been introduced in English and mathematics to enable teachers to plan work which is most appropriate for the group they are teaching. Work is ongoing to introduce the new curriculum from September. Monitoring of pupil progress is now more rigorous and better understood, enabling earlier identification of pupils who are making poor or very good progress. Equally positive, national test scores have improved this year and are especially good in mathematics.

Governors recognise that, in the past, they have not been sufficiently rigorous in holding management to account. The governing body has taken the recommendations of the recent review of governance on board and has acted on these. Governance has been reconstituted with fewer governors now involved. Responsibilities are more clearly defined. There is a clearer understanding and awareness of their role and the need to challenge school managers. The level of training has also intensified and governors are in a better position to both support and challenge. There has been a determination to embrace change and governors are more aware of what is happening in the school. As a result, they are better placed to evaluate the work of the school than previously.

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**

Prior to the inspection, the school was considered to be relatively 'low risk' and only received light touch support and monitoring from the local authority. Following the inspection, local authority officers visit the school more regularly to monitor the progress being made. External support for the acting headteacher was brokered, although this has now been discontinued. Alternative support is currently being considered. The local authority also brokered the review of governance to ensure that it was completed as quickly as possible. The school has received mathematics training and has bought into the middle leader training currently on offer. The school is now more actively engaged with the local authority than previously.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Cheshire East and the Diocese.

Yours sincerely

Leszek Iwaskow

**Her Majesty's Inspector**