

CfBT Inspection Services
Suite 22

West Lancs Investment Centre T 0300 123 1231

Maple View
Skelmersdale
WN8 9TG

Text Phone: 0161 6188524
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk

Direct T 01695 566857

Direct F 01695 729320

Direct email: jkinsman@cfbt.com



28 November 2014

Mr J Sharp
Acting Headteacher
Normanton Junior School
Church Lane
Normanton
West Yorkshire
WF6 1EY

Dear Mr Sharp

Special measures monitoring inspection of Normanton Junior School

Following my visit with Belita Scott, Her Majesty's Inspector, to your school on 26 and 27 November 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 fourth monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in June 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 any more 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 Interim Executive Board and the Corporate Director, Children and Young People for Wakefield.

Yours sincerely

Anne Bowyer
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is at least good in order to raise pupils' attainment, particularly in writing, by making sure that:
 - work given to pupils always matches their varying needs and abilities and that all groups of pupils are effectively challenged, particularly the more-able
 - all teachers have high expectations of what pupils can achieve and pupils are clear about what is expected of them so that they can reach their potential
 - teachers' marking always gives pupils clear and specific information about how to improve their writing skills
 - teachers give pupils more opportunities to improve their writing
 - teachers make sure that pupils have the chance to become actively involved in lessons and to complete tasks on their own. This is to help them maintain concentration and interest.
 - teachers insist that pupils produce writing to the highest standards of which they are capable and that they always present their work well.

- Urgently improve the effectiveness of leadership and management, including governance, by:
 - developing the skills of senior leaders and extending the role of subject leader to more staff so that there is a shared approach to evaluating the school's performance, improving the quality of teaching and raising pupils' achievement
 - making sure that school improvement plans focus clearly and precisely on how the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement will be improved
 - ensuring that plans made for developing pupils' skills do not mean that pupils repeat what they already know and can do as they move through the school
 - undertaking an external review of governance in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved providing the necessary training to develop the roles and skills of governors so that they are fully involved in driving improvement and know exactly how to hold the school to account
 - making sure arrangements for managing the performance of staff are fully in place so that staff are held to account for pupils' achievement and are well supported in bringing about improvement.

Report on the fourth monitoring inspection on 26 to 27 November 2014

Evidence

Inspectors observed teaching, some jointly with the acting headteacher, looked at pupils' work with senior leaders and scrutinised documents relating to school improvement. They met with the acting headteacher, senior and middle leaders and teachers, groups of pupils, parents, the Interim Executive Board (IEB) and a representative from the local authority.

Context

There have been significant changes in staffing since the last monitoring inspection. Six teachers have left the school, three of whom were middle leaders. Five teachers were appointed; three are newly qualified. The deputy headteacher took up post in September. The two assistant headteachers have become phase leaders, as well as subject leads for English and mathematics. A member of staff was appointed as the special needs coordinator.

A substantive headteacher has been appointed for January 2015 and has started working in school for two days a week.

The IEB has two new members, including the Chair of the IEB.

The school is under due process to become an academy as a partner school within a multi-academy trust with Walton Primary Academy and Normanton Common Primary School.

Achievement of pupils at the school

In 2014, the floor target (the minimum standards set by the government) was not met. More pupils made expected and better than expected progress than seen in 2013 but pupils' progress from their starting point at the end of Key Stage 1 was still significantly below that seen nationally. In particular, a large proportion of those pupils with low prior attainment did not make the expected progress, but there was significant underachievement for most groups. In July, the school's own pupil assessment information showed better progress over the academic year in Years 5 and 6, but not enough in Years 3 and 4. In some classes, it was inadequate.

Since September, more pupils have made expected and better than expected progress. Standards are much better in Years 3 and 4 and remain strong in Year 6. Staff absence has contributed to the weaker progress made by pupils in Year 5.

Overall, pupils make better progress in reading and writing than in mathematics. They read with confidence and there is a clear focus on developing their understanding through daily guided reading lessons and targeted interventions.

Better sequencing of teaching in writing and higher expectations of what pupils can and should do is leading to improvements. In Years 4 to 6 there are more opportunities for pupils to write at length and apply the knowledge and skills taught. However, in Year 3, a recent change in the way writing is taught appears to be limiting pupils' progress. This may be because teachers are familiarising themselves with the new strategy but leaders need to check this closely and revise it if necessary. Progress in mathematics is not as strong because, over time, teaching is variable. The new curriculum has raised expectations for what the least able should do but overuse of support from teachers and teaching assistants means that the work seen in books may not be an accurate reflection of what pupils can do. In many cases, teaching and the work set does not challenge other pupils, in particular the most able. Pupils are still doing too much of what they can already do and there are not enough opportunities to deepen their understanding through problem solving and investigations. Basic skills are sharpening because of daily practise. This is speeding up the rate at which pupils can calculate.

Leaders say that the interventions are closing gaps in pupils' learning but there is little evidence at this stage, other than anecdotal evidence, to indicate that the gaps in achievement are closing for specific groups, such as those with special needs and low achievement prior. The special needs coordinator is new to post but has worked swiftly to ensure interventions are timely for those pupils who are underachieving. Leaders know they need to track the progress of this group of pupils more closely and report outcomes regularly to the IEB.

The quality of teaching

Teaching is improving. Inadequate teaching has been eradicated and there is a small proportion of teaching that is good. The teaching of reading and writing is stronger than the teaching of mathematics. These improvements are very recent, so the school needs more time to show that this improvement is sustainable and can be built upon.

Where learning is strongest, teachers have good subject knowledge and understand the sequences needed in teaching and learning to achieve the objectives set. In these classes pupils are fully motivated to learn and rise to the challenges they are given. Tasks are better matched to what pupils need to learn and do and teachers check how well pupils are doing within the lesson to provide the appropriate support and challenge.

Where learning is less effective, it is because teacher subject knowledge is lacking, particularly in mathematics. Teaching and tasks are not always pitched appropriately. This means the work is too easy for some and for others it is too hard. There is an over reliance on adult support for the least able. Pupils are given too much help and scaffolding with their learning and this limits their progress. Their work does not give an accurate picture of what they can or cannot do.

Teaching assistants work hard. Some are more effective than others because teachers provide the direction needed. Some, like some teachers, struggle with subject knowledge, and similar issues arise. For instance, in mathematics, pupils are taught processes, such as decomposition in subtraction or place value in division, without fully understanding them.

Learning environments are much improved. Displays and working walls are up to date and demonstrate how pupils are learning over time. They provide a useful reference point which pupils use in lessons.

Marking and feedback have improved. New staff have adapted quickly to the school's policy and procedure because of the support they have received. Leaders have sought compliance but have recently started to check on and evaluate the effectiveness of marking. There is still some variability in how marking informs teaching and helps pupils to improve but it has clearly strengthened in writing and is helping to raise standards.

Actions to improve handwriting and presentation have been effective. In almost all classes, pupils take greater pride in their work.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Behaviour was not an area for improvement from the inspection in June 2013. Nevertheless, it has been a major piece of development for the school because of the extremely disruptive behaviour of a few pupils. Recent and much needed support from the local authority has helped leaders to address this. In a relatively short time, the behaviour of these pupils has improved considerably. Combined with better teaching, these pupils are coping well and making progress.

Generally, pupils behave very well in class and have good attitudes to learning. New staff have quickly understood and followed the school's procedures for managing behaviour because of the effective induction procedures in place. In most lessons seen, pupils' behaviour was exemplary but, in a few classes where teaching was not as effective, some pupils were slow to settle to work or pay attention.

Pupils are well supervised when moving around school. However, inspectors saw a lot of boisterous play in the two playgrounds and there were few resources available for the children to play with. The seasonal change in weather means that pupils are now confined to two small playground areas. Leaders have not been proactive in adapting provision or making best use of the learning mentors and support staff to ensure pupils have a happy and safe playtime out of doors. During a wet lunchtime, pupils were well supervised in their classrooms and engaged positively with each other as they played games. There are plans in place to improve the school playground and play time experience for pupils.

Pupils raised concerns about name calling, including the use of the word 'gay', which they find upsetting. Leaders have ensured pupils are taught about these things through focused behaviour and safety weeks, assemblies and the curriculum. Nevertheless, where pupils have greater freedom, they are not as respectful to each other as they need to be. Pupils say adults deal with it but some pupils clearly persist and leaders need to challenge this better in order to eliminate it. When in class, pupils cooperate well with each other and are respectful.

The IEB continues to fulfil its statutory duties for safeguarding and ensures the health and safety of the school community.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

The school has turned a corner at last. The actions leaders have taken over the last two terms, in particular, are bearing fruit despite the significant changes to staffing. This has been brought about by the determined leadership of the acting headteacher who has built up strong and positive relationships with pupils, staff and parents and pulled the school together in a way not seen before. However, this turnaround is very recent and has coincided with a more cohesive approach to school improvement by the local authority. This has increased the school's capacity to drive forward the improvements needed.

A new partnership with Walton Primary Academy and Normanton Common Primary is securing the leadership and future of the school and making a difference. The quality of the support from both partner schools, the actions planned and undertaken, the rigour of the checks made and subsequent actions are driving forward improvements in teaching at a much faster pace. This has been particularly successful with the work undertaken with newly qualified staff.

Leaders' self-evaluation is generally accurate. The two assistant headteachers are contributing better to the cycle of school improvement. They are becoming increasingly effective in their roles as phase leaders and subject leaders for English and mathematics because of the support from the acting headteacher and local authority. Throughout, both have demonstrated great resilience and commitment. They have valued the support they have received and the opportunity to develop their knowledge and skills as leaders. With this support, they have made improvements to the curriculum for English and mathematics. This has led to better progression in writing, better coverage and raised expectations. In mathematics, it has raised expectations for the least able and provided teachers with a clearer framework from which to plan. These leaders, along with the newly appointed deputy headteacher, must show that they can be the key drivers for school improvement, especially as the school moves into a new phase of its development.

The systems and procedures for checking, evaluating and acting upon weaknesses in teaching are much more robust. This has led to the recent notable improvements. However, for a couple of teachers, the standard of their work varies and some

aspects of support have had to be revisited. Leaders have persisted by using coaching strategies and providing the training and support these staff need but recognise that some tougher messages will need to be given in the very near future if improvements are not sustained.

Expectations have been raised through target-setting and by constant reference to prior attainment at Key Stage 1. This means staff know where underachievement sits in each of their classes and they are being held to account better for the progress of these individual pupils. Nevertheless, leaders do not have a clear enough picture from recent assessments of the achievement of groups of pupils, such as those with special educational needs and those who receive additional support. This means the IEB cannot evaluate precisely enough how the quality of teaching, spending and additional support is helping to close the gaps in achievement for these pupils. The implementation of a new electronic tracking system has slowed progress with this aspect of data analysis.

The IEB has reduced the need for fortnightly meetings and introduced more formal and informal checking on the progress the school is making. A recent formal check on leadership, teaching and behaviour concurred with inspection findings. The IEB has ensured there is a smooth transition into post for the new substantive headteacher. This has ensured pupils, staff and parents get to know her beforehand and means she is knowledgeable about the school's work. Parents have been kept up to date with the school's progress and the IEB gathers their views through a parents' forum. There are moves to constitute a shadow governing body. Although this has come much later than planned, it is timely given the leadership and management changes coming.

External support

Since the last monitoring inspection in June, the local authority has taken positive and effective steps to support the school and secure its management. Their initial decision to appoint an interim headteacher, while a more permanent solution was found, has ensured the early groundwork undertaken is now bearing fruit. Close partnership working with the headteacher of Walton Primary Academy has helped to accelerate the progress the school is making. Both headteachers have drawn up a very sharp action plan which is helping leaders to focus precisely on what needs improving, how and when. This has provided the local authority with a very effective model for school improvement.

The School Improvement Adviser, although new to the school, has quickly gathered an accurate view of it. She has been proactive in supporting leaders to sharpen and improve their knowledge and skills.

The local authority hosts a monthly performance review meeting with the headteacher, the headteacher of the supporting school, members of the IEB and the school improvement adviser. This committee rigorously questions and challenges all

parties about their roles and the impact they are having on school improvement. Clear actions are given and followed up in a timely manner.

The much needed support from the behaviour support team and close working with other services within the local authority have made a significant difference. The small number of pupils struggling with day-to-day life in school has a much more positive experience. They are making progress because staff are able to manage their behaviour better but they are receiving the help they needed. Pupils feel safer and happier. The headteacher can focus his time on other aspects of school improvement. It is a much calmer school.