

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

Direct T 01695 566937

Direct F 01695 729320

Direct email:jsimmons@cfbt.com



24 June 2015

Ms Ruth Braithwaite
Headteacher
Bedford Primary School
Quarry Road
Bootle
Merseyside
L20 9LJ

Dear Ms Braithwaite

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Bedford Primary School, Sefton

Following my visit to your school on 23 June 2015, 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 February 2015. 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:

- continue to improve the way in which governors independently evaluate the evidence of the impact of actions taken to address the areas for improvement
- make best use of visual displays to engage children in learning activities.

Evidence

During the inspection, I met with you and three members of your senior leadership team, all the members of the governing body's raising attainment plan (RAP) monitoring committee and a representative of the local authority to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. I evaluated your action plan and examined other documentation relating to the impact of the actions you have taken, including

looking at some children's work in their books. I accompanied you and your senior leadership team during visits to all classrooms to see the school at work.

Context

Since the last inspection, an additional assistant headteacher has joined the leadership team and you have made two further appointments to the teaching staff who will take up their posts in September 2015. Two members of staff are leaving the school at the end of this term.

Main findings

Following the school's last inspection, you wasted no time in taking actions to begin to address the issues it raised. You and your governors immediately established a RAP monitoring committee who oversee developments and hold you and your senior leaders to account. You rapidly sought advice from the local authority and other colleague headteachers about the quality of the content and direction of your plan. This led to a swift start to actions to improve the school. The plan is of high quality. The plan's format is clear and it contains the appropriate amount of detail that allows your governors to check frequently that actions are having the desired impact.

The RAP committee meets every month to check on the implementation of actions and discuss the impact they are having. They receive detailed reports from you and your senior leaders. Governors ask probing questions and are growing in confidence in using the evidence you present to evaluate independently the impact of the actions. They recognise, however, that this practice needs further development and they are considering ways of refining their approach; for example, governors rating actions by colour-coding based on evidence and then comparing their evaluations to those of the senior leaders.

The leadership and management of the school have been strengthened through the appointment of a new assistant headteacher, whose fresh perspective on the strategic leadership of mathematics across the school is helping to drive improvements rapidly. Similarly, your own renewed vigour and enthusiasm, which all of your senior leaders share, has allowed you to maintain and enhance the motivation of your staff to improve the school. You have made some additional appointments including one specifically aimed at improving the quality of leadership and management in the early years. These new members of staff will take up their appointments in September. It is therefore, impossible to make any evaluation of their impact at this time.

Your reorganisation of teachers' timetables allows the teaching of pupils in Years 1, 2 and 3 in new, smaller ability-grouped classes in the mornings. As a result, teachers now plan activities that more closely match tasks to the abilities of their pupils.

Consequently, according to the school's own data and the evidence I saw in pupils' books, progress in writing and mathematics is improving.

To ensure your plans are working, you more closely track pupils' progress and attainment. You have increased the rigour of the meetings that you hold with teachers to review pupils' achievement. Each meeting now includes a clear focus on following up the impact of actions to ensure they have successfully addressed the issues you previously identified. You have also sharpened the way you use the outcomes of your observations of lessons. This helps you better evaluate the quality of teaching, by paying closer attention to pupils' learning, rather than the actions of teachers.

Teachers have a much better understanding of the increased expectations you have of them. This is because you have shared with them a set of 'non-negotiables', that identify what knowledge and skills pupils in each year group must achieve, in areas such as spelling, sentence structure, grammar and mathematics. You and your senior leaders then use these non-negotiables as the criteria with which to hold teachers to account.

As well as heightening the expectations placed upon teachers, you have - supported them to develop their own skills and knowledge through effective training, especially in writing and mathematics. Teachers have had the opportunity to work alongside colleagues who are experts in these subjects. Additionally, external trainers and local authority officers have developed staff's skills in the teaching of writing and mathematics. Further training given to staff along with external checks, are ensuring that their assessments of pupils' progress are increasingly accurate, especially in the early years. Some teachers have had the opportunity to visit other schools to see good practice, some of which they are implementing in their own classes and across the school; you have planned further visits to develop this strategy.

Standards of pupils' writing are improving across all year groups because of your increased focus on the subject. There has been much support for early years so that pupils get a good start to writing. In the classrooms we visited, children were provided with opportunities to write in all areas of learning, including those outdoors. In older year groups, 'working walls' are now used to model good practice, develop pupils' skills and increase their confidence in writing.

Mathematics, and in particular, the development of pupils' ability to solve problems, has been your other main priority since the inspection. The outcomes of your teachers' efforts are clearly visible around the school. For example; in the early years children now more regularly have opportunities to explore number and apply the new skills to all areas of their learning. They also have access to a new after school mathematics club, which is very popular. Governors have increased the funding for an external mathematics specialist in Key Stage 1. As a result, many more pupils have the opportunity for additional support in mathematics. In the older years, you make better use of teachers' time to provide smaller teaching groups. As a result of

these actions, your own data tell you that the progress pupils are making in all year groups in mathematics is rapidly improving.

Teachers celebrate the efforts of pupils widely across the school in many colourful displays that often show children's work in a variety of subjects. Teachers do not, however, always ensure the best use is then made of these displays to explain particular concepts or engage other pupils in learning activities.

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

External support

The local authority recognises the school as one that is a priority for its support and has acted quickly to provide appropriate additional resources through the work of its officers and consultants. The school welcomes and readily engages with this additional support from the local authority and uses it to good effect to improve the quality of teaching.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Sefton.

Yours sincerely

John Nixon

Her Majesty's Inspector