

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 1231
Text Phone: 0161 6188524
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk



11 February 2016

Mrs Julia Dickson
Headteacher
Otley the Whartons Primary School
The Whartons
Otley
West Yorkshire
LS21 2BS

Dear Mrs Dickson

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Otley the Whartons Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 22 January 2016, 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 July 2015. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. At its previous section 5 inspection the school was also judged to require improvement.

Senior leaders and governors are not taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the last section 5 inspection and plans are not sharply focused on rapidly bringing about improvement. The school should take immediate action to:

- implement more efficient assessment systems that accurately define pupil progress, inform planning and secure accountability
- monitor more closely the progress made by all groups of pupils from their different starting points to identify and eliminate gaps in performance
- equip leaders at all levels with the skills needed to manage their areas of responsibility and contribute more successfully to improvement
- raise expectations of what pupils can and should achieve at each stage of their development, including the early years
- improve the consistency of good or better teaching and learning across the school.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with you, other senior leaders, subject leaders, pupils, the governing body and a representative of the local authority to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. The school improvement and action plans were evaluated. We visited all classes together with the deputy headteacher and looked at pupils' books. I scrutinised documentation and school information, including parent questionnaires, monitoring activities and performance management.

Context

Since the section 5 inspection, which judged the school to require improvement, no significant contextual changes have taken place.

Main findings

You have successfully created a culture whereby staff feel positive and united about improvement. However, planning and systems to support the realisation of this are ineffectual. Systems of assessment and monitoring are insufficiently rigorous to contribute effectively to planning and to identify appropriate next steps. As a result, staff are unclear about expectations and targets, and leaders cannot measure performance and progress precisely enough. School information is not analysed meticulously to see exactly what needs to be done and actions are not evaluated carefully enough to determine their impact on improvement. For example, the post-inspection school action plan lacks measurable success criteria and tight timeframes. Lines of accountability are unclear and pupils' progress is not evaluated or evidenced. Because of this, improvement is too slow.

Staff say that they value the professional development opportunities they have been afforded. The joint planning time that has been set aside for leaders of English and mathematics has been particularly supportive in enabling more consistency across subjects in terms of policies and procedures. However, essential actions are not prioritised. For example, whilst writing in the early years was identified as an area for improvement, the progress of groups of children has not been measured carefully enough and children are still not making rapid progress. Children's work has not been examined closely and expectations of what children can do are too low.

You have prioritised work with parents, offering workshops and opportunities to be involved with their children's learning. Thus, the majority of parents have very positive impressions of the school. They are certain that their children are happy and well looked after. Most would recommend the school to others. Pupils corroborate this stance as they say that they enjoy coming to school and have 'lots of friends'. Attendance and punctuality are good. Although pupils say that the behaviour of a few pupils interrupts their learning, they are confident that adults will deal with any

issues. Pupils value your work to improve the physical environment. Pupils agree that 'it's better than it was last year'.

The review of the pupil premium spending recommended at the previous inspection has taken place and prompted some appropriate actions in the light of the findings. For example, a named governor now holds responsibility for monitoring pupil premium spending and its impact on outcomes for pupils. Nevertheless, because assessment and monitoring systems lack rigour and the progress of pupils in receipt of the funding is not followed closely enough, neither governors nor leaders can accurately determine the impact of actions. Interventions to narrow gaps for this group of pupils are not carefully evaluated and so gauging their success is difficult.

Governors bring a wealth of additional educational expertise to leadership and management of the school and are well placed to impact on improvement. They quickly commissioned the external review of governance recommended at the previous inspection and have taken account of the results to create an action plan, demanding increased commitment from committee members. Governors have met with the school improvement adviser and have received reports from senior and subject leaders to ensure they have up-to-date information. This said, many good intentions have not been realised. It is not, therefore, evident that leaders and managers fully appreciate the rapidity with which improvement is required.

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 headteacher has brokered the support of the Red Kite Teaching Alliance and, with the local authority, Bramhope Primary from the NOCTUA Teaching Alliance. These links are offering opportunities for middle leaders and senior leaders to work in partnership with others to strengthen their skills and abilities in tackling school improvement. It is too early to ascertain the impact these partnerships are having on improvement in terms of pupils' outcomes.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Regional Schools Commissioner and the Director of Children's Services for Leeds.

Yours sincerely

Fiona M Manuel

Her Majesty's Inspector