

Serco Inspections  
Cedar House  
21 William Street  
Edgbaston  
Birmingham  
B15 1LH

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



18 November 2012

Bernadette Holmes  
Strathmore Infant and Nursery School  
Old Hale Way  
Hitchin  
SG5 1XR

Dear Mrs Holmes

**Requires improvement monitoring inspection visit under section 8 of the Education act 2005 to Strathmore Infant and Nursery School**

Following my visit to your school on 16 November 2012, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report on the findings of my visit. 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 September 2012. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

**Evidence**

During the visit, meetings were held with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, the Governing Body and a representative of the local authority. The school improvement plan was evaluated and the inspector considered the outcomes of recent monitoring activities.

**Context**

There have been no contextual changes since the recent section 5 inspection, which judged the school to require improvement.

**Main findings**

Leaders have worked with the local authority to tighten up their action plans. Activities within this plan are focused on the most important areas for improvement.

Monitoring activities are designed to ensure teachers are embedding improvements. Teachers are being held to account for the progress pupils make. Feedback to teachers is accurate and identifies strengths and weaknesses. Middle leadership remains underdeveloped and it is important that the school develops their model of middle leadership so that the responsibility for school improvement is delegated appropriately. Some of the activities arranged by middle leaders are not focused enough to bring about rapid school improvement. It is important that middle leaders are clear about what they want to happen and how they are going to achieve this.

The action plan provides a very clear view of what needs to be done. It is regularly adapted to take account of on-going monitoring and reviews. Senior leaders talk with insight about the challenges ahead. They recognise that the route to school improvement is by improving teaching and their actions are focused on doing this.

Governors are determined to support the school to be good. They have allocated individual governors to monitor particular aspects of the school improvement plan. Governors have received training so they better understand data about pupils' progress. As a result, they have a much clearer idea of what to look for and what questions they might ask to challenge leaders. They are keen to work with middle leaders in evaluating the effectiveness of school improvement planning. They have plans to evaluate the effectiveness of school improvement planning much more frequently so they can influence the next steps more quickly.

Senior leaders and governors have begun to take action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection. Following the visit to the school, HMI recommend that further action is taken to:

- Clarify roles and responsibilities for middle leaders, ensuring that they have a clear understanding of their contribution to school improvement.
- Understand what successful schools have done to improve achievement for more able pupils.

Ofsted will continue to monitor the school until its next section 5 inspection.

### **External support**

The local authority has supported the school in tightening up their improvement plan so it is clear to see what will happen and when. Consultants have started to work with middle leaders in developing their leadership skills. This work is essential in ensuring their capacity to improve continues to grow. The local authority has committed to review the progress of the school periodically. The school is in no doubt about the local authority's expectation that they move swiftly towards being good.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Hertfordshire Local Authority and as below.

Yours sincerely

Michael Sheridan  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**