

Serco Inspections
Colmore Plaza
20 Colmore Circus Queensway
Birmingham
B4 6AT

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

Direct T 0121 679 9160
Direct email:



18 March 2012

Miss M Rawlings
Interim Headteacher
St George's Lower School
East Street
Leighton Buzzard
LU7 1EW

Dear Miss Rawlings

Requires improvement monitoring inspection visit under section 8 of the Education act 2005 to St George's Lower School

Following my visit to your school on 18 March 2013, 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 December 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with the interim headteacher and other senior leaders, members of the governing body and two representatives from the local authority. The school improvement plans were evaluated alongside a range of other self-evaluation and monitoring documents.

Context

There have been no changes to the staffing since the previous inspection. There is currently one remaining vacancy on the governing body.

Main findings

A detailed action plan provides an appropriate framework to tackle the key issues from the last inspection and increase rates of pupil achievement in English and mathematics. Responsibilities are clearly identified within specific timescales to

support school improvement. Targets are linked to pupil performance to enable the school to measure success effectively. Discussions with senior and middle leaders confirm that there is now a sharper focus on improving the quality of teaching and the achievement of pupils in all classes. This is especially so in the teaching of phonics (the sounds pupils need to know in order to read). The progress of all pupils in their phonic development and reading skills is monitored carefully, and specific support is provided when required to accelerate achievement. All staff with a leadership role participate in the monitoring of learning activity within their areas of responsibility. Their findings confirm that there are increased levels of consistency in both planning and the teaching of phonics. This has led to an improving trend in the attainment of pupils in reading and writing. This good rate of improvement is yet to be reflected in the achievement of pupils in mathematics because planned training for staff is yet to fully take place.

Teaching and learning are monitored regularly by the interim headteacher, and clear targets are set for teachers to work at. The effective sharing of best practice amongst staff has led to good improvements in the quality of teachers' marking. A national leadership governor has worked closely with the governing body to provide a specific training programme for all governors in the use of data and monitoring the work of the school. As a result, governors demonstrate a growing level of understanding about the school's strengths and weaknesses and are better prepared to ask challenging questions of senior leaders about school performance. A programme for the review of all policies is in place.

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

- increase the rate of progress pupils are making in mathematics similar to that being made in English.
- undertake a further visit to monitor the quality of teaching and learning in mathematics.

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

External support

The local authority provides appropriate levels of support and guidance to staff and governors, including specific training for teachers and governors through a clear statement of action. Local authority improvement officers and a commissioned school improvement professional maintain a close overview of the school to ensure that it quickly tackles the key issues from the inspection to secure the necessary improvements in pupils' outcomes. The school is making effective use of an external consultant to review improvements being made in the teaching of literacy skills.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Central Bedfordshire.

Yours sincerely

Philip Mann
Her Majesty's Inspector