

Tribal
1-4 Portland Square
Bristol
BS2 8RR

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

Direct T 0117 311 5323
Direct email: suzy.smith@triblagroup.com



7 June 2013

Mrs D Herriott
Headteacher
County Bridge Primary School
Anson Road
Walsall
WS2 0DH

Dear Mrs Herriott

Requires improvement monitoring inspection visit under section 8 of the Education act 2005 to County Bridge Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 7 June 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 2012. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

During the visit, I held meetings with you, the current deputy headteacher and the deputy headteacher who is due to start in September, the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Governing Body and two parent governors. I had a telephone call with a representative of the local authority. The school improvement plan was evaluated. I visited lessons in most classes in the school, accompanied by you or a senior leader, during which time I talked to pupils and looked at their work. I also looked at a sample of teachers' planning.

Context

You have gained a post at another school and are due to leave at the end of this term. A new headteacher has been appointed and will start her role in September. The deputy headteacher will retire at the end of this term and a member of staff from within the school has been appointed to replace her.

Main findings

After the inspection, staff received training on using questioning better in their lessons. Your monitoring of the impact of this has been thorough, and indicates that the training has started to help teachers to use questioning more frequently and more effectively. Monitoring of lessons and of pupils' work is often providing clear feedback to teachers about what is working well and what they need to do next. A good example is the monitoring of pupils' progress by the literacy leader. This clearly shows what she has told teachers they need to do to improve, what action they have taken as a result, and the impact on pupils' progress.

You have carried out an audit of the teaching of phonics (the sounds that letters make), with the support of an external consultant. A useful audit of each teacher's skills in this area has been completed, which has given you a clear idea of who needs training or support in which areas. This has started to change the way that phonics is taught, though is too new to have had any impact on pupils' progress.

Good partnerships have been formed with local schools to focus on raising attainment particularly in mathematics. The school's data indicates that this has had a positive impact on the outcomes for the most able pupils. The partnership is also helping teachers to moderate pupils' work accurately, checking that the levels they are giving are the same as the levels given in other schools for work of the same standard. The sample of teachers' planning that I looked at during this visit also showed that they are thinking about how best to challenge the most able pupils in each lesson. This focus needs to continue.

You have put considerable time into trying to improve the quality of teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage and some progress has been made. Nevertheless, significant weaknesses are evident in the Early Years Foundation Stage. The Nursery classroom is untidy and children do not have good routines for putting equipment away after they have used it. The different areas do not have a clear purpose. Some of the furniture and resources are shabby. The large outdoor learning area is not maximised. The courtyard area that is used by the Nursery and Reception classes is in a poor state of repair, with old furniture in the corner, and is not fit to be used.

The governing body has been very involved in the appointment of a new headteacher and deputy headteacher. This has taken quite a lot of time since the previous inspection and they are pleased with the appointments they have made. Governors know that aspects of the school are not as good as they should be. They want to help the school to improve but have not been clear about how to do so. Their meetings tend to focus on ongoing school business and do not include enough focus on the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection or on the progress that pupils are making. In my meeting with governors during this visit, they sensibly decided that they needed an 'action committee' as well as the full governing body and their usual committees, such as finance, to help them to provide a greater level of challenge to the school. Governors have a range of skills and various

amounts of time available to come into school. They recognise that they are not always making the most of what different governors can offer.

Senior leaders and governors have begun to take appropriate 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:

- improve the organisation, learning environment and equipment in the Early Years Foundation Stage
- stop using the courtyard area until it is safe, clean and suitable
- find out what experience, skills, perspectives and time each governor can contribute and organise governors' links with the school to make the best use of these
- make sure that when they meet and when they come into school, governors clearly focus on the actions that the school needs to take to improve at a good rate
- complete the local authority review of governance and the subsequent plan for action.

HMI will:

- carry out a review of the Early Years Foundation Stage in the autumn term
- attend a meeting of the full governing body to provide training on evaluation and interpreting data
- provide links to other schools.

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

External support

A good range of support has been provided by the local authority and the school has made the best of this. The partnership project set up by the authority has been valuable. The authority has reviewed the school's progress on a termly basis, with a representative of the governing body. The local authority is committed to continuing to provide support for the Early Years Foundation Stage and for governance.

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

Yours sincerely

Sue Morris-King
Her Majesty's Inspector

The letter will be copied to the following:

- Appropriate authority - Chair of the Governing Body/Interim Executive Board
- Local authority – (including where a school is an academy)
- the academy chain where relevant
- Diocese – for voluntary aided and voluntary controlled schools
- The Education Funding Agency (EFA) if the school has a sixth form
- The person or body responsible for appointing foundation governors if the school has a foundation
- The lead inspector.