

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



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Mrs Julie Housden
Headteacher
Derwent Community School
St Mark's Road
Derby
DE21 6AL

Dear Mrs Housden

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Derwent Community School

Following my visit to your school on 20 June 2013, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report 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. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you and the deputy headteacher, a representative of the governing body and a representative from the local authority. You presented the most recent information about pupils' progress and attainment as well as documentation of the monitoring of the quality of teaching. I evaluated your school action plans. We both conducted a walk around the school.

Context

There have been no significant changes since the last inspection.

Main findings

Since the inspection, you have devised plans which identify appropriate actions to address the areas for improvement. However, only a few of the points for action

have been addressed and there has been a lack of urgency in tackling the weaknesses in teaching and improving pupils' achievements.

Governors have not been fully involved in developing plans for improvement. As a result, they are unclear about their role in monitoring their areas of responsibility to ensure that improvements are being made. Your plans make it clear in the longer term how governors and leaders will evaluate whether you have been successful, but they do not have enough measures to judge success in the shorter term.

You have developed a coherent strategy for monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching across the school. This draws together evidence from lesson observations, scrutiny of pupils' work and from on-going assessments of pupils' learning. It is at an early stage of implementation. Currently leaders of English and mathematics are not sufficiently involved in checking the quality of teaching and promoting improvement.

You have been successful in ensuring that assessments of pupils' learning are accurate. This has enabled you to track closely how well individuals and groups of pupils are doing. The tracking reveals the gaps in attainment between pupils' reading and writing skills, which is a barrier for securing good levels of achievement in English.

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:

- improve your school improvement plan by including sharper success criteria relating to the progress and attainment of groups of pupils, so that you can evaluate the impact of your actions over time
- focus more specifically on the root causes of underachievement in writing so that pupils can make accelerated progress
- ensure that governors and middle leaders are fully involved in monitoring and evaluating the work of the school.

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

External support

The school has established partnerships with two other schools in order to share and develop effective practice. This has raised expectations and is beginning to have an impact on improving teachers' skills in marking and feedback to pupils. The local authority improvement officer has worked effectively with the school to moderate assessments of pupils' learning to ensure that they are accurate.

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

Yours sincerely

David Carter
Her Majesty's Inspector