

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 5359
Direct F 0117 315 0430
Direct email: suzy.smith@tribalgroup.com



18 July 2013

Mrs J Reich
Headteacher
Benenden Church of England Primary School
The Village Green
Benenden
Cranbrook
Kent
TN17 4DN

Dear Mrs Reich

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Benenden CE Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 17 July 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 in May 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

During the visit I held meetings with you, other senior leaders, governors and a local authority representative. I visited each classroom with you to see the school in action, and evaluated the draft post-Ofsted action plan and a sample of pupils' work. The new headteacher for September joined our meetings.

Context

Since the last inspection there have been no changes to staffing. A new headteacher has been appointed to start in September.

Main findings

After initial disappointment with the inspection outcomes you have addressed the issues for improvement with a determination that the school will be judged to be 'good' as soon as possible. Teachers understand what needs to be done and are supportive of the changes that are needed.

Your draft post-Ofsted action plan concentrates on the right areas of the school's work and includes more thorough and rigorous monitoring of teaching than previously. Key staff such as subject leaders have a good understanding of the aspects of their subject requiring improvement and know where they need to focus their efforts. However the plan in its current form is not always clear enough about how the school's progress will be checked. This makes it difficult for governors and senior leaders to monitor impact, and decide what is or is not working so as to target their work. The plan does not clearly identify what will be expected of all teachers in their lessons so that pupils have consistent experiences in all classes in order to make good progress.

Since the section 5 inspection you and other leaders have set up effective systems to ensure that monitoring of teaching is more frequent, rigorous and focused on raising achievement. Although these changes are too recent to show the impact on improving the quality of teaching, there are positive signs such as in mathematics and English there is now clear guidance about how teachers should plan their lessons. There has not yet been enough time to check if this is improving pupils' progress. Teachers are working more effectively together to check their assessments in writing and mathematics within the school to agree about the levels pupils are reaching. This means they are better placed to ensure lessons build on what pupils know. However, there has not been thorough enough checking with other schools to assess the accuracy of this work. The school should continue to exploit links with local 'good' schools in order to support this work.

The external review of governance is now underway, supported by the local authority. Governors are very committed to the school and are enthusiastic in their support. They understand their role in monitoring the post-Ofsted action plan and acknowledge that the plan needs to make it clearer what they can expect to be happening and how they will check. They are rightly keen to develop a core group of governors to track the progress of the school against post-Ofsted action plan. The lack of regular milestones on the draft post-Ofsted action plan needs to be addressed to enable them to know how well the school is making progress so that it is judged to be 'good'.

Staff, pupils and governors continue to struggle with the constraints of school accommodation that is cramped and overcrowded and the impact of the necessary frequent moves between buildings that leads to a loss of learning time.

Senior leaders and governors are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection. To accelerate progress further the school should:

- sharpen the action plan so it:
 - is always clear how the impact of actions will be checked
 - shows exactly what is expected of teachers in order for teaching to be judged to be 'good'.
- develop links with schools judged to be 'good' in order to support teachers' assessment of pupils' attainment.

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 local authority has recognised the school needs more support than it was receiving before the last inspection. Work has already started to help teachers to develop key aspects of their work and although it is early days there is some evidence that many teachers are starting to incorporate the ideas discussed into their lessons. The recommended review of governance is underway and governors are ready to act on any recommendations received. Further support should continue to be targeted closely at the school's identified priorities for improving teaching.

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

Yours sincerely

Amanda Gard

Her Majesty's Inspector