

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
Email: christina.bannerman@tribalgroup.com

11 September 2013

Mr Peter Newbold
Headteacher
Southway Junior School
Southway
Burgess Hill
RH15 9SU

Dear Mr Newbold

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Southway Junior School

Following my visit to your school on 10 September 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 June 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

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

- judge the effectiveness of specific teaching skills, so that observations of classroom practice can drive targeted training
- concentrate on ways of improving the achievement of particular groups of pupils in a class and across the school, especially those eligible for the pupil premium and the most able
- forge links with headteachers in other schools to share good practice, and provide you with an external view on your work.

Evidence

During the visit, I met with you and your deputy headteacher, and with a representative of the local authority. I also had a telephone conversation with the vice chair of governors. These discussions identified the actions taken since the last inspection. I briefly visited all classes in the school with you and your deputy. I evaluated the school improvement plan and the updated self-evaluation document.

Context

Since the previous inspection you have taken up your post at the school, and two new teachers and two teaching assistants have also joined the staff. You have reallocated roles among senior staff and some middle leaders, and the governing body has adjusted its structure and ways of working to match the school's new priorities.

Main findings

Having visited the school several times last term, you were well placed to give the school a clear and strong sense of direction at the first staff meeting of the year. The school's action plan sets out your priorities with a good level of detail. It is a useful working document because it allocates tasks well, uses sensible timescales, and makes it easy for staff and governors to judge whether actions have had the desired outcomes at various points in the school year. Your planning has been assisted greatly by the school's judgements of its performance having been honest and accurate since January 2013.

Pupils' achievements and good teaching are appropriately central to your plans. You have wisely prioritised teaching across all four year groups becoming consistently good, while supporting already good teachers to develop outstanding practice. You already have plans to give staff opportunities to visit other schools to see more teaching that is outstanding, with the aim of broadening their understanding of what constitutes very good practice, and stimulating useful discussion. You are also hoping to form alliances with other local headteachers to check on the quality of teaching across your schools, as well as to offer opportunities to learn from each other. This cooperative work can support improvement powerfully. You and other senior staff judge the quality of teaching confidently and accurately. You do not currently identify and judge the effectiveness of specific teaching skills, and so cannot use such information to steer training for specific staff and groups of teachers.

Analyses of achievement are largely based on whole-school and whole-class data, and also provide useful insights into the performance of groups of pupils at risk of

underachieving. Your analyses show that gaps in the standards achieved by those eligible for the pupil premium and their peers are still unacceptably high in some year groups. Overall progress in reading, writing and mathematics is currently patchy across the school but there are areas of strength to build on. Pupils with disabilities and/or special education needs do not yet make consistently strong progress, but there are good strategies in your planning documents to improve their achievement.

Senior team and middle leader responsibilities are now much clearer, following the separation of year-leader and subject-leader roles. The management of the quality of teaching and learning is now given much more status and a stronger steer than it has had previously. Governors have made useful adaptations to their committee structure, and have altered their meeting organisation, to prioritise monitoring progress against the action plan. Many of the governors are relatively inexperienced, but they demonstrate a good understanding of their role in challenging and supporting you to achieve the milestones and targets you have set in your plans.

The school has kept parents well-informed about the school's responses to the previous inspection. They remain very supportive and you are conscious of their important role in working with the school, to continue to improve provision for their children.

Ofsted may carry out further visits and, where necessary, provide further support and challenge to the school until its next section 5 inspection. This will include notifying the school of opportunities to attend specialist seminars run by Her Majesty's Inspectors, and maintaining contact over the school year.

External support

The school has benefited from good support from the local authority over the last year. Currently, there is general leadership support for you as a new headteacher, and local authority advisers are working with teachers in English and mathematics to improve their effectiveness, and providing support for assessment strategies. Staff are working well with these advisers, and you are managing these contributions to ensure coherence, and so that your priorities are supported.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for West Sussex. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Alan Taylor-Bennett
Her Majesty's Inspector