

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

Duncan Finlayson
Headteacher
Wilmington Primary School
Common Lane
Dartford
DA2 7DF

Dear Mr Finlayson

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Wilmington Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 11 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:

- organise more systematically through the action plan the steps being taken to improve the school so that staff know more clearly the order in which events need to take place
- strengthen the success criteria within the plan to include more challenging and specific targets for year groups and groups of pupils so that progress can be measured more easily across the year
- make sure senior staff are clearer about their roles in leading improvement
- make more use of links with other schools to improve its work
- ensure governors use the school action plan more rigorously to check how well the school is making progress.

Evidence

During the visit I held meetings with you, other senior leaders and members of the Governing Body to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. I visited each classroom to see the school at work. I evaluated the school action plan and looked at the school's data about pupils' progress.

Context

Since the inspection in June 2013 one new teacher has joined the school. Specialist teachers for physical education and music are now in place.

Main findings

Staff, governors, pupils and parents were disappointed by the findings of the inspection in June. Since then you have worked hard to build the morale of the staff team and they are now in a good position to move forward and build on what the school does well, in addition to addressing the areas for improvement.

You know what needs to be done and have already started to make improvements. You have carefully restructured the staff team to strengthen teaching in Key Stage 2 where it has been less effective. The marking and feedback policy has been improved so there is more consistency and staff are positive about implementing this. Target cards have been introduced for writing so that pupils know exactly what they need to work on. Pupils understand how to use these. However not all teachers make it clear enough to pupils what they should be able to do by the end of the lesson and so some pupils still do not make as much progress as they could. You recognise that this is an area for staff training. You are taking suitable steps to explore the use of mathematics across the curriculum but this work is at an early stage.

Senior staff are keen and capable of driving improvements. They understand the need to check how well new initiatives are working but because the action plan lacks clarity they are not always sure exactly what they are looking for or where their priorities lie in relation to improving teaching. You rightly wish to develop the team as leaders and acknowledge that you need to be more explicit about what you expect them to do so that you can use their strengths more efficiently.

You have carefully considered the needs of pupils who have fallen behind or have special educational needs and have set up a programme of support to help them to make better progress. It is too early to see how effectively this is working but you understand the importance of checking how well these pupils do so you can change arrangements if needed.

Work has started to improve communication with parents. The new pupil progress sheets provide a helpful record for parents to know how well their child is doing and how they can support at home. You have made a good start on helping parents know how the school teaches reading and mathematics, for example by holding information events. I welcome your plans to repeat these so that more parents can attend, and consequently support their children better.

Governors know the school well and are fully committed to its improvement. They have undertaken recent training to support them in their work. They have a good understanding of what the school needs to do to become 'good' and their role in this. They recognise that the action plan needs to be clearer so that they can check exactly how well the school is doing, especially in terms of improving teaching and checking pupils' progress.

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

As an academy the school is not supported by the local authority. Good use has been made of external consultants to support staff training and further work is planned. The school has links with a local consortium of schools and two other academy schools, and should build in work with these to support areas of school improvement such as moderation of pupils' work.

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

Yours sincerely

Amanda Gard
Her Majesty's Inspector