

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

Direct T: 0121 6799169
Direct email: mathew.mitchell@serco.com



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Sue Thompson
Headteacher
The Ryde School
Pleasant Rise
Hatfield
Hertfordshire
AL9 5DR

Dear Mrs Thompson

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to The Ryde School

Following my visit to your school on 24 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:

- ensure that monitoring by staff and governors is used rigorously to both evaluate and consolidate recent improvements.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you, subject leaders for English and mathematics, three governors and two representatives of the local authority. I also had a tour of the school and looked at some of the pupils' books. The action plan was evaluated alongside the latest monitoring reports by yourself and the local authority related to the performance of the school.

Context

I note that four teachers left the school at the end of last term to be replaced by four new teachers at the start of this academic year. The governing body will shortly be increasing in size by two.

Main findings

Under your decisive leadership the school is rapidly improving. Analysis of the latest data from the 2013 national tests confirms that attainment in English and mathematics is above average at the end of Key Stage 2 and progress is better than that expected nationally. My scrutiny of assessment data for all other year groups indicates that this good achievement is evident in all classes. These improvements are a direct result of your effective monitoring of teaching and learning. Furthermore, my review of your accurate and evaluative observations shows that teaching is mostly good with some that is outstanding. After the inspection you quickly arranged some specific training for all staff in how to mark pupils' work more effectively so pupils know exactly what they need to do next to improve. My analysis of pupils' books confirms this extra training to be effective because better marking is accelerating pupil achievement.

In partnership with the governing body you have rapidly implemented a detailed action plan to focus sharply on what needs to be done to address the points for improvement from the inspection. Subject leaders for English and mathematics have responded well to the task ahead of them. They are highly motivated and keen to work as a team to tackle the key priorities for improvement. You have ensured that they play a greater role in monitoring teaching and learning in their subjects. The result of this work is yet to be reflected in a sustained trend of improvement over time.

Following a comprehensive review, the governing body has quickly re-modelled the way it checks the school's work. Individual governors demonstrate greater awareness about pupil progress data and how it can be used monitor school effectiveness and staff performance. A monitoring schedule is now fully in place. However, governors are yet to make specific visits to assess progress of the school against the action plan.

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

It is good that you have utilised the support of local authority improvement officers to support both your own development and that of the staff. The establishment of further links with other local schools makes effective use of resources and increases the range of training and support available to staff. Termly meetings with local

authority improvement officers provide you with good opportunities to measure progress against the action plan.

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

Yours sincerely

Philip Mann
Her Majesty's Inspector