

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 679 9166
Direct email: helen.johnson@serco.com



22 October 2013

Stephen Barker
Headteacher
St Pancras Catholic Primary School
Stratford Road
Ipswich
IP1 6EF

Dear Mr Barker

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to St Pancras Catholic Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 22 October 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. Please pass my thanks on to staff.

The visit was the first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection on 5 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 all pupils are challenged to attain the highest possible standards in all classes.
- Ensure that governors' records of meetings identify where challenges have been made and questions have been asked, and that any associated targets are clear so that progress towards them can be easily monitored.
- Ensure that governors receive familiarisation training on how the school evaluates progress using Average Points Scores.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you and other senior leaders, members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. The school improvement and action plans were

evaluated. A total of six classes were visited to evaluate learning at Key Stages 1 and 2.

Context

Since the last inspection the school has a new Chair of the Governing Body. As headteacher you have also been able to devote your time to school improvement because you no longer teach full-time. The school has two newly-appointed middle leaders, both of whom are experienced classroom practitioners.

Main findings

Since the last inspection the provisional results of assessments and examinations for 2013 have become available. At Key Stage 1 these show that pupils made better-than-average progress across all subjects. Boys made better progress and attained higher standards than girls.

At Key Stage 2, standards attained in writing, particularly for boys, dipped from being above average for the last three years to average. Attainment in reading and mathematics also declined slightly. Those pupils with special educational needs made faster progress than their peers and when compared to similar pupils nationally because their needs are evaluated early and effective support is provided promptly.

In class, teachers plan their lessons thoroughly. However this sometimes constrains them from moving away from the plan, for example when pupils have understood a topic and are ready to tackle a new one, or when pupils need more time to grasp a concept. In a small number of classes at Key Stage 1 expectations are too low because the learning is not pitched at a level that challenges all those present. Pupils sometimes become bored and restless as a result.

In the most successful lessons, notably at Key Stage 2, learning is pitched at a level above that expected for the age of the pupils. All pupils learn the same material, but the support given to help understanding is varied as needed. Much of this support is provided by skilled teaching assistants. Those who find a topic more difficult are supported by expert questioning, prompting them to find a solution. These lessons are flexible, responsive, and pupils are quiet because they are busy figuring out how to tackle problems. They develop skills of independent learning well. The school's own data give early indications that the progress these pupils make is accelerating.

Teachers have improved their assessment practice since the last inspection. It is now accurate and gives a reliable indication of how well individual pupils and groups are doing. Increasingly, these data are used in the management of teachers' performance so that they are more accountable for the success of their pupils.

You and your colleagues have a clear idea of what needs to be done to improve the school. Together, you have quickly identified necessary steps, and your action plan is exemplary. Targets are precise and challenging with clear timescales and responsibilities defined. Similarly, governors have produced an improvement plan for their own practice. They have many of the skills needed to drive the school forward and give good support. They recognise the need to become more familiar with the school's assessment of progress, particularly the role of Average Points Scores, so that progress towards performance targets can be monitored accurately. Sometimes, the notes of governors' minutes do not record challenges well. This means that agreed actions can be difficult to check at subsequent meetings.

The school has very recently modified the method that it uses to monitor teaching. Although it is too soon to see a sustained impact, the new system places much greater emphasis on what pupils learn. Therefore it will be easier to make sure that lessons are taught at a sufficiently challenging level.

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

Since the school was judged to require improvement the local authority has allocated an advisor to undertake improvement work. The school has been pleased with the support provided in areas such as action planning and support in literacy and numeracy. Much of the improvement seen in teaching practice has come from expertise within the school, although the local authority has validated the accuracy of lesson observations and assessment.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Suffolk and the Diocese of East Anglia.

Yours sincerely

Ian Seath
Her Majesty's Inspector