

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 9152
Direct email: sunny.chimber@serco.com



15th October 2013

Robert Hardcastle
Whitehills Primary School
Acre Lane
Kingsthorpe
NN2 8DF

Dear Mr Hardcastle

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Whitehills Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 15 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.

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.

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:

- develop and embed a whole school strategy to ensure that there is a consistent teaching approach in reading, writing and mathematics to stretch and challenge the most able.
- sharpen up improvement plans making explicit clear milestones as to how each area for improvement will be monitored and evaluated.
- ensure that pupils have a sharper picture of the levels they are working towards and how the "next steps" in marking contribute to that.
- Make use of any external support available to further strengthen governance, which may include an external review of governance.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you and the deputy headteacher, three governors, the local authority school adviser, subject leaders of maths and English and a group of pupils. The school's improvement plans were evaluated and the school's latest unvalidated achievement data for 2013 were scrutinised. I also carried out a work scrutiny during my meeting with pupils. I visited classes with you in Key Stage Two and spoke to some pupils during lessons about their learning and progress.

Context

There have been no significant changes to staffing since the school's inspection in May 2013.

Main findings

The leaders have made significant progress to address the most urgent areas for improvement identified in the last inspection. The school's unvalidated results for 2013 shows a sharp improvement in achievement in writing; progress and attainment measures are now above national averages*. Leaders have begun to see the impact of their whole school writing strategy, "Write from the Beginning". Senior leaders have successfully implemented a whole school marking and feedback policy called "Next Steps"; pupils report that they have found the approach to be very useful to their learning. The headteacher has further developed the programme of CPD to improve the monitoring and evaluation skills of subject leaders, although further refining of whole school plans will ensure that these activities are carried out even more effectively. The headteacher is ambitious and driven; he is well supported by staff and governors of the school. His outward-looking approach to school improvement has led to new and exciting links with a local teaching alliance, which will further support leadership and teaching at the school. The headteacher is committed to ensure the sustainability of any improvements made. Governors are experienced and diligent in supporting and challenging leaders; they have welcomed suggestions that may further support and strengthen their role.

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 offers timely and effective support for the school. They have supported the headteacher in his partnership with a local teaching alliance, which will further develop the professional development of teachers, especially middle leaders. Some teachers have also made use of the Improving Teaching Programme, which is delivered locally. Early signs are that this programme is making an impact

on teacher performance in the classroom. An external consultant is used to offer further quality assurance for teaching and leadership.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Northamptonshire local authority and as below.

Yours sincerely

Zarina Connolly
Her Majesty's Inspector