

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

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Mr Matthew Easton
Headteacher
Brenzett Church of England Primary School
Brenzett
Romney Marsh
Kent
TN29 9UA

Dear Mr Easton

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Brenzett Church of England Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 18 November 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 September 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:

- strengthen the success criteria within the action plan to include more specific targets for year groups and groups of pupils so that progress can be measured more effectively across the year
- include milestones within the action plan so that progress towards goals can easily be checked.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you, subject leaders, two teaching assistants, two members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. I evaluated the school development plan, visited each class to see the school in action and spoke to pupils in Year 6 about their targets.

Context

The subject leaders for English and mathematics were new to their roles at the start of September 2013. Since the inspection you have appointed a permanent teacher to cover a vacancy in the Reception/Year 1 class. This teacher will start in January 2014.

Main findings

Staff and governors were disappointed by the findings of the inspection in September. However the team has pulled together and is in a good position to move forward and build on what the school does well, in addition to addressing the areas for improvement.

You acted quickly to plan the necessary improvements following the inspection. Your action plan covers all the right areas but needs refining to be a more useful tool for senior leaders and governors. It is not always clear enough exactly what your goals are and how progress towards these will be measured.

You have started to put your plans into place. Already you have organised training for some teaching assistants to improve their questioning skills. These staff report that this has been helpful and that they are using their new-found skills to challenge pupils more effectively. It is too early to check the impact of this work.

You have organised useful support for the two new subject leaders for English and mathematics to develop their roles, including coaching to carry out lesson observations. Although this work is at an early stage they are positive about what they need to do and have a good understanding of how to improve their subjects.

A system of 'assertive mentoring' has been recently introduced. This is helping pupils to assess how well they are doing. Older pupils are confident about how to use the new system and understand how it links to their work in class. However the scheme is still being developed and targets are not all written simply enough for younger pupils to understand. We spoke about how this could be adapted and how teachers could link the targets set more closely to their lessons. Work remains to be done to ensure pupils regularly make the requested improvements to their marked work.

Governors have a good understanding of their role. The new Learning Group is helping governors to focus precisely on improvements in teaching and learning. Governors have rightly requested that subject leader reports be standardised so they can compare subjects more easily. New governor progress files provide a useful summary of the school's data and help governors to see how well different classes are doing. However, a weakness in the action plan is that it is not always clear enough what governors should expect to see for each class across the year, so it is hard for them to check improvements.

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 is providing useful assistance, coaching staff as well as monitoring the pace of improvement. You actively seek support from other schools and use it well. For example, teachers have worked with local schools to check their assessment of pupils' work in mathematics is accurate. Such work is invaluable to enable teachers to benefit from good practice outside of the school.

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

Yours sincerely

Amanda Gard
Her Majesty's Inspector