

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 9158
Direct email: rachel.dayan@serco.com



3 December 2013

Sylvia Bunting
Acting Headteacher
Peak Forest Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School
Peak Forest
SK17 8EG

Dear Mrs Bunting

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Peak Forest Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 2 December 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 October 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:

- evaluate the impact of newly-introduced learning strategies in writing and mathematics, and react accordingly
- engage the local authority in helping to maintain stability at leadership level, and contributes to improving the quality of teaching
- amend the school action plan, so that it lists those members of staff responsible for monitoring and evaluating actions, and states actions and milestones for success more clearly.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you, your two main classroom teachers, the Chair of the Governing Body, a representative of the local authority and a teaching consultant to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The school

action plans were evaluated and other documentation was considered. We visited both of your school's classrooms.

Context

The school's substantive headteacher is currently absent on a long-term basis due to ill health. You are currently acting as headteacher on a part-time basis; your first day coincided with the first day of your recent inspection. A Local Leader of Education offers practical support and advice, when requested to do so. The Chair of the Governing Body took up his post shortly before your recent inspection.

Main findings

Many of the challenges facing the school are exacerbated by its much smaller-than-average size, as a small number of hardworking members of staff are necessarily charged with a wide range of responsibilities. You currently have 38 pupils on roll and only two main classroom teachers, neither of whom teaches full-time.

In this light, you have provided some much needed stability to the school and support to the staff. However, your effectiveness is limited by the part-time nature of your role. A Local Leader of Education has also provided support to the school, though her impact is also restricted by time constraints.

Despite these circumstances, it is to the credit of your staff that effective action is being taken to improve the school. Your two main classroom teachers and the teaching assistants they work with are focused on ensuring their pupils make the best progress they can. Due partly to the very small size of the school, teachers know each pupil's needs well. In one lesson with just nine pupils, four different tasks were undertaken which had been prepared to meet individual pupils' needs.

Since your recent inspection, there have been several new teaching strategies used with individual pupils or groups of pupils. Improving pupils' skills in calculation was highlighted as an area for development by your recent inspection. One of your teachers now spends time two mornings every week on developing mental calculation skills. All members of staff received training from an educational psychologist on better understanding pupils' working memory skills. Some Year 5 pupils are halfway through a writing support programme.

Teaching assistants are very actively involved in pupils' learning, both during whole class lessons and on a one-to-one basis. One teaching assistant is overseeing a phonic writing programme for some pupils with special educational needs in years 2 and 3. Another is helping to develop the motor skills of a pupil who is supported by a statement of special educational needs.

It is too early to judge the impact of these strategies, though the members of staff involved speak positively about them; teachers will evaluate the outcomes early next year.

The recently appointed chair of governors has increased the level of professionalism of the Governing Body. He drafted a strategy document which has helped governors focus on the school's areas for improvement. He has also arranged to meet the chair of governors of another very small school to discuss potential improvement strategies. Since your recent inspection, the Governing Body has been strengthened by a new member who has experience of improving management systems. A skills audit is imminent and this will help identify how the Governing Body can be further strengthened. The chair of governors is fully aware of what needs to be done to improve the school, and he understands that the Governing Body has a crucial role to play in this regard.

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 representative has helped to establish some stability at leadership level in light of the substantive headteacher's long-term absence. He assisted in your recruitment and he also secured the help of a Local Leader of Education. The local authority representative is providing support to the school through a consultant who specialises in improving the quality of teaching. Both the consultant and the representative understand that the support of the local authority is particularly vital to this school.

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

Yours sincerely

Ian McNeilly
Her Majesty's Inspector