

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 9163
Direct email: lewis.mackie1@serco.com



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Mrs Susan Skinner
Headteacher
Hartshorne CofE Primary School
Main Street
Hartshorne
DE11 7ES

Dear Mrs Skinner

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Hartshorne CofE Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 3 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 April 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 leadership by ensuring all senior leaders have the skills they need to play their full part in driving school improvement
- identify measurable targets and points in time to check on the success of all school improvement actions
- ensure the information given to the governing body is clear and precise about the impact of improvement actions taken.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you, other senior leaders, the governing body and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The school improvement plan and other school documentation were evaluated. The headteacher accompanied the Her Majesty's Inspector on a tour of

the school. A brief visit was made to every classroom. The teaching of the sounds that letters make (phonics) was observed. Two formal lesson observations were carried out jointly with the headteacher when a sample of pupils' work was examined. Informal discussions were held with pupils.

Context

There have been no changes to the context of the school since the section 5 inspection.

Main findings

You and the school staff have demonstrated your determination to make the necessary improvements to the school. You are working together effectively, with the support of the local authority, to improve pupils' achievement, to improve the quality of teaching and to strengthen leadership.

Pupils' progress in their understanding of phonics has accelerated, enabling them to catch up and meet the levels expected of them at the end of Year 1. Pupils' achievement in reading, writing and mathematics at the end of Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 also improved in 2013. Nevertheless, while progress has accelerated for many, this is not the case for all pupils. Inconsistencies remain in pupils' attainment and the progress that they make in some subjects in some year groups. Because you are more carefully analysing pupils' assessment information, alongside the work in pupils' books, you are aware of whether any gaps in learning identified are closing swiftly enough. The extra support some pupils need is being targeted more swiftly to where it is needed most.

You have a clear idea of the strengths and areas for development of the school. As a result, you have prepared and implemented a school improvement plan which identifies the appropriate actions. In some cases the plan gives detailed targets based on the clear identification of good or better achievement for pupils, along with regular milestones to check that plans are working. This is not always the case.

You have an accurate view of the quality of teaching. Your judgements matched those made by Her Majesty's Inspector during the inspection monitoring visit. You have quite rightly strengthened the system for managing the performance of class teachers so that it more closely focuses on the progress that their pupils are making. You are offering appropriate support and professional development to help pupils achieve the targets set for good or better progress.

Since the most recent section 5 inspection teachers are asking more carefully targeted questions to challenge pupils' thinking and to make them explain their ideas. Teachers were seen to be using visualizers effectively to help pupils improve their work in lessons. There is now a clear set of expectations as to how spoken and written feedback to pupils should be carried out. Some good examples were seen,

particularly in writing. The school's own monitoring confirms that not every teacher has implemented these equally effectively. For example, teachers do not always make sure that pupils have responded to the next steps they have been given or that their responses are correct.

The members of your senior leadership team are participating in a range of monitoring and evaluation activities, including the scrutiny of pupils' work, teachers' planning and marking. They are knowledgeable about the attainment and progress pupils make in the subjects for which they have lead responsibility. Their strategic role is underdeveloped. For example, they have not developed the skills to observe and evaluate teaching first hand, to drive improvements, or to hold others to account for the quality of their work.

Members of the governing body have responded positively to the development points given to them at the last inspection. An external review has been completed and a report on its outcomes recently received. As a result, members of the governing body are checking on the effectiveness of the school's work first hand. They have improved their understanding of school data and are asking more meaningful and challenging questions of school leaders. The information they are given by school leaders is not always clear and precise enough to make it clear to them whether improvements are happening quickly enough to get the school to 'good'.

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 link advisor has provided useful support to help you improve the impact of lesson observations and performance management. A teaching and learning consultant has provided useful training and support which has helped to improve the quality of teachers' questioning, the spoken and written feedback to pupils and teachers' use of visualizers in order to quicken the progress that pupils make in lessons and to raise their attainment.

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

Yours sincerely

Joanne Harvey
Her Majesty's Inspector