

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 01173115323
Direct email: suzy.smith@tribalgroup.com

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Mrs Delia Doyle
Headteacher
St Augustine's Catholic Primary School
Cranbrook Road
Gants Hill
Ilford
Essex
IG2 6RG

Dear Mrs Doyle

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to St Augustine's Catholic Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 27 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 July 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:

- sharpen the action plan by refining the monitoring process so that you are clear about the evidence you will gather, who will gather it and when; be clear what you expect to see at regular intervals along the way and involve governors in the process
- redouble efforts to close the gap between those for whom the school receives pupils premium funding and the other pupils by looking carefully at how the funding is being spent and evaluating what differences you can see as a direct result.

Evidence

During the visit, I held meetings with you, other leaders, a group of more able pupils, the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Governing Body and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. I evaluated the school action plan. I also looked at pupils' work in mathematics and English as well as records of pupils' progress, performance management records and evidence of your monitoring of the quality of teaching. You gave me a guided tour of the school during which I was able to see pupils in lessons. I examined the recent record of a monitoring visit by the diocese of Brentwood.

Context

Since the last inspection one member of staff has left and has been replaced by a newly qualified teacher

Main findings

The middle leaders are driving change through the regular meetings you have introduced to discuss the pupils' progress. Staff are now more aware of individual pupils' needs. As a result, this allows staff to develop their teaching skills. The introduction of the new system to track pupils' progress using data is making significant difference to the pace at which pupils improve because it is enabling teachers to intervene swiftly when required.

The more able pupils I met told me that there are now activities that they find challenging. One pupil said 'lessons are more interactive and more enjoyable [since September]'.

All of the areas of concern identified in the last inspection report are addressed in your action plan, including work in mathematics and English. Teachers are already beginning to asking searching questions in lessons. Each stage in the plan is achievable in the time allocated. The checking of the success of each part of the plan needs to be strengthened by making the criteria measurable. The targets need to focus on the progress of the pupils as well as the attainment with a focus on the different groups of pupils in your school, including those that attract the Pupil Premium funding. The monitoring and evaluation of each step in the plan needs to be clearer; there is a role for governors in looking at the plan regularly as well as using the Local Authority to give expert monitoring at key stages.

The previous inspection report noted gaps in both the attainment and the progress of pupils for whom the school receives the Pupil Premium and the other pupils. This gap was widening last year. This gap remains a concern because not only is it still too wide generally but there is also considerable variation in the size of this gap in different year groups.

Governors are now aware of their role and are beginning to provide you with challenge as well as support. They have a growing understanding of the information you provide and are asking for more detail about the progress that pupils are making. The proposal to form a 'Requires Improvement' committee is a sensible way forward to help the school keep on track.

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 very supportive. It is providing direct support through advisers and also in financing the school's own initiatives for improvement. Links with other local schools have been established to help staff improve their practice.

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

Yours sincerely

Thomas Packer
Her Majesty's Inspector