

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 5323
Direct F 0117 315 0430
Email: suzy.smith@tribalgroup.com

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Mr Jon James
Headteacher
Winnall Primary School
Garbett Road
Winnall
Winchester
Hampshire
SO23 0NY

Dear Mr James

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Winnall Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 5 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 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:

- Add more detail to the school's plan to show what will be done, specifically, to improve pupils' punctuation, spelling and handwriting
- refer to information on pupils' attainment when scrutinising their books to check that the right level of work is planned for the different abilities.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you, the Chair of Governors and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The school's action plan was evaluated along with information on pupils' progress and the quality of teaching.

Main findings

The headteacher has kept up good momentum since the inspection, with a sharp focus on improving the quality of teaching and pupils' progress. He is clearly promoting a culture of high expectations in his efforts to move the school to good. The methods for collating information on pupils' attainment are clear and manageable. When the headteacher observes lessons, he gives teachers relevant, specific points for improvement to show how the lesson could have been improved further. The quality of teaching is being monitored in a range of ways, through looking at pupils' books and checking information on their progress, as well as lesson observations. This is good practice. The next step is to give careful consideration to the pupil's current attainment, when checking books, to make sure that work is pitched at the right level and they make good progress.

At the section 5 inspection, the school was asked to improve pupils' achievement in writing first and foremost. The headteacher has rightly decided to focus also on achievement in reading and mathematics. In writing, pupils' books show that teachers are beginning to have higher expectations of their pupils, in terms of quantity and quality. Writing is receiving a higher profile, with displays in classrooms giving tips and ideas and teachers demonstrating different aspects of writing themselves. Teachers were also seen modelling skills effectively in mathematics.

The school's plan for improvement is crisp, sharp and clear. There is an appropriate sense of pace to the timelines and targets, in the drive to move the school to good. The plan is not specific enough about how spelling, punctuation and handwriting will improve and what the school plans to do to make pupils' behaviour and safety good. That said, there were no signs of inappropriate behaviour or attitudes during the monitoring inspection. On the contrary, pupils were involved and interested in their learning. Attendance has picked up this term in all but two year groups – Year 2 and Year 4. This demonstrates the work done to improve attendance, so far, is starting to have an impact.

Governors are keeping in close touch with the school's progress. The Chair of Governors has been keen to find out how well teaching is improving, to assure himself that the school is moving in the right direction. He is asking challenging questions and is, rightly, working on bringing more governors on board so that they too can become more knowledgeable about the school's journey of improvement.

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 Strategy Review Group is steering and monitoring the school's improvement well. The headteacher has reacted positively to support from the local authority, including some provided by a National Leader of Education, and has welcomed the degree of professional challenge this has brought to the school's work. He has already put into action some helpful ideas from colleagues, to track pupils' progress in more depth, for example, and analyse attendance in each year group to show how it varies. Particular care is being taken to make sure that training is matched carefully to what the school actually needs, and adapted when necessary.

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

Yours sincerely

Margaret Dickinson
Her Majesty's Inspector