

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 5307
Direct email: rachel.evans@tribalgroup.com

22 January 2014

Miss J Trickett
Headteacher
Hoo St Werburgh Primary School and Marlborough Centre
Pottery Road
Hoo St Werburgh
Rochester
Kent
ME3 9BS

Dear Miss Trickett

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Hoo St Werburgh Primary School and Marlborough Centre

Following my visit to your school on 18 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:

- agree with the local authority how the headteacher may be best supported and challenged throughout the demanding tasks ahead, and ensure the support agreed is effective
- refine the current school action plan, as indicated below
- ensure that the impact of pupil premium expenditure on reducing the wide achievement gap between pupils entitled to free school meals and those not is carefully evaluated.

Evidence

During the visit, I met with you, senior staff, some pupils and representatives of the Governing Body and the local authority. I evaluated documents, including the school's action plan and the data showing how much progress pupils are making. We toured the school together when lessons were taking place and I looked at a few samples of pupils' work.

Main findings

Since the inspection, working with your senior team, you have further improved key management systems. Data about how well pupils in each class are progressing are gathered in a timely way and analysed well. There are efficient methods for coaching and guiding teachers to improve their work, linked well to their performance management targets. Training for staff is well focused.

The school action plan is suitably targeted to deal with the areas most needing improvement and you can show some early impact from it. We discussed and agreed how the plan could be sharpened further. For example, there is no need to have success criteria for each action. A number of actions could together help reach one, or a few, very precisely worded objectives or criteria. The action plan from the inspection could be incorporated within a broader school improvement plan.

The recently gathered data shows that pupils' attainment, and, in many year groups, their progress, in English and mathematics, is not as good as it could be. There is still evidence of underachievement. There have, however, been some improvements in mathematics this school year, reflecting the school's recent work in this area. Pupils entitled to pupil premium funding do not achieve as well as their peers. This needs to be urgently addressed. Rightly, you are about to check on the progress of pupils entitled to pupil premium funding who are also identified as having special educational needs. It is important that the distinction between these two categories is not blurred.

You are keenly aware that the quality of teaching is mixed across the school. Bringing rapid improvement is now a key priority. Useful staff training has helped to bring greater consistency in practice across the school. All classrooms are organised in similar ways and teachers are working hard together to develop aspects of their work. We also discussed the importance of teachers taking up subject leadership roles. This should help the school improve and deepen its curriculum, across all subjects, and help members of staff develop their leadership skills.

The behaviour of pupils that I observed around the school and in lessons was very positive. It was very pleasing to see so many pupils willingly taking on responsibilities at lunchtime.

The Marlborough Centre is knowledgeably managed. It was good to hear of how pupils and staff from the mainstream school and the centre work and join together.

You, with your senior colleagues, know what is working well in the school and what still needs improvement. All parties, including governors and the local authority, agree that there is much to do for the school to reach a good inspection grade. As the Chair of Governors aptly put it, 'it's not going to be a quick fix.' However, you say with justification that the school is better placed now to improve than it has been. Staffing is more stable, and there is greater capacity within the senior leadership team. This shows, in turn, your determination to deal with some difficult matters and to make well-considered staff appointments. The school is at a new stage. We agreed that your leadership going forward is vital to the school's future prospects. We agreed further that, due to the considerable challenges, it will be necessary and helpful for you to have a well-qualified person to work alongside you for the foreseeable future, in an advisory capacity. This person should provide both challenge and support on a frequent basis.

The governing body continues to develop its work, questioning and encouraging the school and staff usefully.

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

Local authority support to the school is helpful but limited. It is important that the support and challenge given to you is enhanced, as stated above. The local authority has agreed to work with the school to make this happen and to discuss with me regularly the school's progress.

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

Yours sincerely

Robin Hammerton
Her Majesty's Inspector