

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

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Mrs Sue Mudie
Headteacher
Olivers Battery Primary School
Austen Avenue
Olivers Battery
Winchester
SO22 4HP

Dear Mrs Mudie

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Olivers Battery Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 16 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 not taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the last section 5 inspection. The school should take immediate action to:

- strengthen leadership and ensure that school leaders work together to provide strong direction, raise expectations and implement rapid improvements in teaching
- ensure that the school action plan is shared with all staff and that they are held to account for improving their work.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you, other senior leaders, members of the Governing Body and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The school action plan was evaluated. We made short visits to lessons, observed pupils rehearsing for the Christmas show and

performing in a samba band for their parents. I also met with a group of Year 6 pupils and scrutinised some examples of pupils' work.

Main findings

Actions to improve the school have not been sufficiently urgent or decisive. The headteacher and senior leaders have not worked together effectively to provide strong direction and a common purpose for staff. The headteacher has not made her expectations clear enough and senior leaders have not ensured that good and outstanding teachers share their skills and expertise throughout the school. Consequently, improvements to teaching and pupils' progress are patchy.

The action plan to improve the school is now in place and focuses clearly on the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection. The plan includes measurable milestones that show the steps needed for pupils to make accelerated progress. However, the action plan has not yet been shared with all staff and they are not clear about what they need to do to improve. Planned actions to improve the school have not yet been communicated to parents.

School leaders have ensured that teachers' assessments are accurate and are now able to measure pupils' progress more precisely. More teachers are beginning to have higher expectations of what disabled pupils and those with special educational needs can achieve and are setting them more ambitious targets. However, not all teachers correctly identify and tackle the gaps in pupils' learning and as a consequence, pupils' progress is too slow.

Senior leaders have rightly focused on improving teachers' planning and increasing the level of challenge in lessons. Pupils have more opportunities to tackle difficult problems. However, in some lessons teachers still set work that is too easy, which sets a limit on achievement. Not all teachers are vigilant about how much productive work is being completed when pupils are working independently. Pupils do not always have enough guidance from the teacher about what to do next. Senior leaders have followed up this weakness by providing training for teachers in better approaches to guided reading. However the impact of the new approaches has not been evaluated yet.

Some classrooms contain helpful, relevant and up-to-date displays to support pupils' independent learning. However, some classrooms are not organised helpfully to promote current topics and the outdoor area in the reception year does not include resources or materials to enhance pupils' early acquisition of literacy and numeracy skills.

Senior leaders are trying to make marking more effective and some teachers include planned time in lessons for individual verbal feedback to targeted pupils. Pupils make better progress when teachers give them specific advice and provide enough time for them to act upon it. Pupils like the success criteria sheets at the top of their work

and appreciate the opportunity to select and highlight the good points in their work. However, some pupils would like more detailed written feedback to help them remember what to improve for the next piece of work. Not all teachers give precise instructions about what pupils need to improve. Some pupils are not given enough time to correct and improve their work, so they keep on making the same mistakes.

One successful strategy to improve extended writing has been to give pupils one exercise book for all writing tasks across the different subjects. Pupils build up a store of writing types and skills in one place, which reinforces learning and links between topics. Pupils say that they use their writing as a reference point for the next task. Teachers have also provided an increased range of opportunities for pupils to practise calculations and their times tables, both at a basic level and when solving more complex problems.

Governors have increased their involvement in the daily life of the school and are visiting more frequently. They have benefited from training and guidance from the local authority. Governors have also altered their committee structure to reflect the priorities for improvement and are focusing on better communication with parents. However, Governors have not tackled weaknesses in leadership effectively or challenged senior leaders to work together more productively to drive improvements in the school.

As discussed, Her Majesty's Inspector will visit the school again next term to evaluate progress since this visit and to provide further support and challenge.

External support

The local authority has provided focused support for the school for some time, including before the last inspection. However, the support provided has not brought about improvements quickly enough or focused sufficiently on strengthening leadership. The local authority provided some crucial guidance regarding the school action plan and standardising teachers' assessments. The school has also benefited from useful training and advice from the English and mathematics advisory teams. The local authority leadership partner has observed teaching jointly with senior leaders in order to develop their skills in monitoring and evaluation. Senior leaders would benefit from further links with leaders of good and outstanding schools.

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

Yours sincerely

Janet Pearce

Her Majesty's Inspector