

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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Graham White
Headteacher
Hurst Green Church of England Primary School
London Road
Etchingam
TN19 7PN

Dear Mr White

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Hurst Green Church of England Primary School

Following my visit to your school on Monday 13 January 2014, 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 November 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:

- improve the teaching of writing for Year 2 pupils and accelerate the progress of this group
- make sure that the targets for pupils' achievement are sufficiently ambitious for all groups of pupils.

Evidence

During the visit, I discussed the action taken since the last inspection with you and other senior leaders, including the chair and vice chair of governors. I also had a telephone discussion with a representative of the local authority. I had a tour of the school and lunch with the children. I evaluated a number of key documents such as

the school development plan, subject action plans, self-evaluation document, monitoring information and up-to-date pupil achievement data.

Main findings

You and the senior leaders had already identified the weaknesses identified during the inspection; however, you have quite rightly sharpened the focus on these specific areas for improvement. The school action plans are now much clearer about how these weaknesses will be tackled. Useful professional development activities and staff training have already taken place. All staff have taken part in training to improve teaching and learning in mathematics lessons so that they meet the needs of all pupils and make sure that more able pupils are appropriately challenged. Teaching assistants have also been trained so that they are able to support pupils, particularly in reading, speaking and listening. Several teachers have observed outstanding teachers in other schools and improved their own practice as a result.

The school's policies on marking and assessment, and teaching and learning have been suitably revised. Regular, planned moderation sessions are now on the agenda of every staff meeting to ensure that teachers accurately and regularly assess pupils' work and identify the next steps in learning. The formats used for all monitoring activities have been revised so that there is a much sharper focus on how well pupils are learning in lessons and over time. The assessment information gathered last term shows that most pupils are making reasonable progress in reading, writing and mathematics. Where individual pupils or groups of pupils are making slower progress than others, this has been identified and is being tackled through improving teaching and by providing catch-up activities where appropriate. However, the progress of Year 2 pupils in writing is worrying as almost half of them did not make any measurable progress during the first part of the autumn term.

The governors are well informed, knowledgeable and provide challenge as well as support. Their systems for monitoring and evaluating the school's work are closely aligned to regular assessments of pupils' achievement so that governors know in detail how well groups of pupils are doing. The milestones for improvement in the school development plan are specific and measurable so that progress towards achieving the school's goals is readily evaluated. However, the targets for pupils' progress are similar for all pupils and do not take account of where there has been underachievement in the past for particular groups and where there is a need for some groups to make faster progress to catch up.

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 provided extensive support in the past when the school required special measures and the headteacher received valuable support when he was first appointed. The authority also provided financial advice and support to manage long term illness and inadequate performance of staff. The support has reduced in recent years as the school has improved. The local authority intends to provide additional advisory support and access to training as appropriate. The school benefits from collaborative working with a group of local schools. Several teachers have already observed colleagues in other schools and activities such as cross-school moderation of pupils' achievements and joint lesson monitoring are planned.

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

Yours sincerely

Sheena MacDonald

Her Majesty's Inspector