

Serco Inspections  
Colmore Plaza  
20 Colmore Circus Queensway  
Birmingham  
B4 6AT

T 0300 123 1231  
Text Phone: 0161 6188524  
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk  
[www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

**Direct T:** 0121 679 9166  
**Direct email:** helen.johnson@serco.com



25 January 2014

Mr Geoff Holmes  
Acting Headteacher  
Richard Whittington Primary School  
Thornbera Gardens  
Bishop's Stortford  
Hertfordshire  
CM23 3NP

Dear Mr Holmes

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Richard Whittington Primary School**

Following my visit to your school on 24 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:

- identify and address the reasons for the recent slowing of progress in writing in Key Stage 2
- confirm that assessment is accurate and rigorous through cross-moderation with the recently established partner schools
- strengthen the culture of continuous improvement, for example by:
  - re-launching the programme of lesson study, where teachers work together in small groups to plan lessons and observe each other teaching them

- identifying teachers who might benefit from the improving teacher and outstanding teacher programmes offered by local teaching school alliances
- make sure that lesson observation records include examples of cause and effect between teaching and learning and that feedback to teachers makes reference to the teacher standards
- review the allocation of non-teaching time for senior leaders in light of their roles in driving improvements.

## **Evidence**

During the visit, meetings were held with you and other senior leaders, subject leaders, members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. Brief visits were made with you to three lessons and the school improvement plan was evaluated.

## **Main findings**

Senior leaders and governors have agreed a comprehensive action plan for the next two terms, which addresses the areas for improvement identified in the recent inspection. The plan demonstrates the senior leaders' capacity for further improvement because it includes other important aspects identified through self-evaluation. Because the plan is ambitious, it makes considerable demands on some senior leaders in relation to their allocations of non-teaching time.

The monitoring of teaching and pupils' learning has been tightened up. The school has long had clear records of pupils' progress in key subjects, but the data is now being analysed more carefully. The performance of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is being checked rigorously, as is the progress of the most-able pupils. Assessments are now made of pupils' attainment every half term, to allow a quicker response to any signs of underachievement.

The most recent assessments show that Year 6 pupils are on track to show good progress by the end of the year, though a recent slowdown in reading needs attention. The most recent assessments show that pupils in Years 4 and 5 have not yet made up for their slower than expected progress in writing and mathematics last year. Year 3 pupils have made a good start in reading and mathematics but not writing. Senior leaders have amended the school improvement plan to acknowledge that writing needs to improve, but have not yet worked out a detailed response.

For achievement to be judged good at the next inspection, senior leaders will need to show that pupils in all year-groups are making good progress from their different starting points. They will also need to present evidence that internal assessments are accurate. There is some evidence already: end-of-key-stage assessments are accurate and teachers' assessments are consistent with others in the school. Confirmation is now needed that the school's internal assessments are in line with those made in other schools.

The quality of teaching is being improved by a mixture of whole-school training and individualised feedback to teachers. Teachers are beginning to work with colleagues from schools with proven track records, to see strong practice. Efforts have been made, particularly in mathematics, to plan more interesting lessons that give pupils more time to work independently and in groups. Teachers are shortening their lesson introductions and making greater use of visual aids. This frees up time to monitor pupils as they work, and to check their understanding. As a result, support and challenge can be more responsive to pupils' needs.

Teachers are responding well to the professional guidance they are receiving and are determined that the school will improve. Lesson observation and work scrutiny by senior leaders is perceptive and leads to pertinent feedback, which often identifies subject specific strengths and points for improvement. Standard criteria are used to judge the quality of teaching but feedback could be improved by giving examples of how teachers' actions influence pupils learning. Teachers' performance management targets are linked to the national teacher standards, and these links could be made more explicit in the feedback from observations.

In the past, teachers have been involved lesson study, where they work together in small groups to plan lessons and observe each other teaching them, to hone their effectiveness. This can play an important role in building a culture of continuous improvement, but has not happened recently.

The governing body has already benefited from a review of governance conducted by the local authority, though the process is not yet complete. Governors recognise the need to record their monitoring activity in more detail. They are using data on pupils' progress and the quality of teaching to hold senior leaders to account. Each governor has a link role that allows them to observe an aspect of the school in detail and this helps the governing body to maintain and validate the information supplied through headteacher reports.

Ofsted may carry out further visits and, where necessary, provide further support and challenge to the school until its next section 5 inspection. The school has agreed to provide regular updates about pupils' attainment and progress.

### **External support**

The local authority allocated a good level of support for the school through the school improvement partner and its advisory staff, though most of the latter has yet to happen. Partnerships have been set up with two strong Hertfordshire schools and these are already showing some benefit in relation to teaching and leadership. There are opportunities locally to enrol individual teachers in programmes to help them teach consistently good or outstanding lessons.

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

Yours sincerely

Stephen Abbott  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**