

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
Email: suzy.smith@tribalgroup.com

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Pamela Dryden
Headteacher
St Matthew's Church of England Primary School
Langley Road
Surbiton
Surrey
KT6 6LW

Dear Miss Dryden

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to St Matthew's Church of England Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 16 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:

- make the monitoring of teaching and learning central to the actions that leaders take and act swiftly on what they find.

Evidence

During the visit, I met with you and the deputy headteacher, other teachers who have specific responsibilities, the Chair of the Governing Body and two other governors and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. I evaluated the school's action plans. Minutes of

governing body meetings, achievement information and your records of monitoring the quality of teaching and learning were scrutinised. I joined you to visit some classrooms where we looked at pupils' English and mathematics books. I listened to some pupils read from Years 1 and 2.

Context

Since the inspection, the deputy headteacher has returned to the school from maternity leave and the governing body has appointed a foundation governor. Currently, one teacher is absent from the school and this class has been covered by reorganising your existing staff.

Main findings

You demonstrate a clear determination to tackle the issues identified during the recent inspection, and an experienced leadership team supports you. The outcome of the inspection was difficult for staff and governors to accept. You shared your concerns with me about the impact that the inspection outcome was having on encouraging families to send their children to the school. You understand that tackling the issues rapidly and robustly is the best way to address these concerns, and have been skilful in helping the staff and governors to accept the judgement.

Your detailed action plan identifies the actions that leaders will take and the expected outcomes. The plan lacks detail about who has the specific responsibility for assessing the effectiveness of each action as well as a clear timescale for when it will happen. Leaders now spend more time evaluating the quality of teaching. However, your observations focus in detail on what the teacher is doing rather than on evaluating its impact on pupils' learning.

You have used your links with other schools to support the improvements that you plan. Your work with another headteacher to strengthen your own monitoring skills by carrying out joint observations of teaching, is leading to a greater understanding of where the teaching is best. You have set up a link with a Year 1 teacher from a neighbouring school who is working with your Year 1 teachers to improve how lessons are planned, so that work is better suited to the needs of different pupils.

Teachers have the opportunity to observe each other in order to improve their own classroom practice. You plan to extend this approach, so that teachers are able to observe outstanding lessons in other schools. You have provided a template for teachers to use when planning their lessons, ensured that pupils have targets in English and mathematics and made it clear that you expect teachers to mark pupils' work regularly. However, your expectations are not met to the same high standard in every class and you now need to ensure a consistent approach from all teachers.

Governors want the very best for the school and have high aspirations for its future. They know the school well, but have been too accepting of the information that they have received. They have not been rigorous enough in challenging assertions made by school leaders about the quality of teaching and the performance of pupils. They now understand this and have made plans to ensure that their questioning is consistently more rigorous. They have not yet started to monitor the action plan but have commissioned training for all governors on how to interpret and forensically analyse data. The intention is to sharpen their questioning of leaders and help them to gain a more thorough understanding of the performance of different groups of pupils.

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 has appointed an experienced School Improvement Partner to challenge and support you and other leaders to bring about improvements at the school. They have provided subject specialists to work alongside leaders and teachers to improve teaching in English, mathematics and science. You have valued this support and are of the opinion that it has been targeted appropriately to the needs of the school. Governors say that the local authority's support has been proportionate to the school's needs, and I agree with them. The local authority is maintaining a careful watch over the pace of improvements. It receives regular reports about the impact of leaders' actions from the School Improvement Partner.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Kingston upon Thames and the Diocese of Southwark.

Yours sincerely

Adam Higgins
Her Majesty's Inspector