

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 5359
Direct F 0117 315 0430
Email: christina.bannerman@tribalgroup.com

20 January 2014

Hugh Rawson
Headteacher
St James CofE Primary School
Grotto Road
Weybridge
KT13 8PL

Dear Mr Rawson

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to St James CofE Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 20 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 headteacher should take further action to:

- demonstrate stronger leadership of achievement, by using every classroom visit to focus sharply on the progress pupils are making and by challenging any teacher not demonstrably planning for the successful learning of every individual

The school should take further action to:

- immediately improve provision for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, as recommended by the local authority review
- evaluate teaching in light of a wider range of evidence, so that judgements reflect pupils' typical learning over time, rather than snapshots of classroom practice, and are not therefore over-generous.

Evidence

During the visit, I met with you, other senior leaders, the Chair of the Governing Body, a representative of the local authority, and a representative of the diocese, to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. I evaluated the school improvement plan and read other documents related to school improvement. I made short visits to all classrooms to observe learning.

Main findings

You are rightly proud of the school's strengths, particularly its strong emphasis on core values and community spirit. However, you acknowledge that there has not been a strong enough focus on achievement, to ensure that all pupils thrive, not just spiritually, emotionally and socially, but also academically. You accept the need for higher expectations of pupils' progress, and to develop systems which make sure that no child falls behind. You and your senior team are now committed to achieving this critical shift in emphasis and change is underway. The deputy headteacher summed this up succinctly when she said, 'everyone in the whole school is now fundamentally talking about progress.'

The Chair of the Governing Body has a clear view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. She is rightly impatient for improvement, including by building a stronger team of governors. To this end, a review of the governing body has been commissioned and was scheduled to begin immediately following this inspection visit. The review will be undertaken by an experienced National Leader of Governance, brokered by the local authority. The Chair of the Governing Body agrees that this must have 'teeth', so that the team of governors emerging from the review is the right one. She holds you firmly to account for improvement and scrutinises your actions and intentions for their impact on learning.

Teachers now check pupils' progress more frequently. Accountability has been strengthened by follow-up meetings in which teachers have to explain to senior leaders why any individuals or groups are not making the progress they should. You have overhauled assessment, by re-training teachers in how to make accurate evaluations of national curriculum levels and how to judge progress, so that the school has a stronger baseline from which to set targets and help pupils improve their work. As a result, senior leaders are better informed about how groups of students are doing. They can say, for example, that there is not yet enough acceleration in achievement in mathematics in Year 6. These whole-school systems are a significant step in the right direction, but during the inspection we discussed the need for them to be repeatedly underpinned by your assiduous attention to the quality of learning in every classroom, for every child. You do not always communicate strongly enough your sense of urgency for learning to improve.

An action plan is in place which effectively addresses the key issues arising from the inspection and links improvement to higher expectations of pupils' achievement. A senior local authority officer has scrutinised the plan and her critique has helped you to re-draft and strengthen it. A local authority specialist has visited the school to work with the special educational needs co-ordinator and identified a range of ways in which provision for disabled pupils, or those with special educational needs, can be improved. It was not possible during this visit to discuss these plans with the special educational needs co-ordinator, as she was unavailable. This will be a priority when I return to the school.

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

Support from the local authority is well-targeted and indicative of a sound evaluation of the school's performance. The diocese is not directly involved in school improvement work but will have a place at regular 'Interim Review and Challenge' meetings, so that it is able to offer complementary support as necessary and practicable.

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

Yours sincerely

Christine Raeside
Her Majesty's Inspector