

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

Direct T: 0121 6799163
Direct email: lewis.mackie1@serco.com



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Mrs Kim Buxton
Headteacher
New Whittington Community Primary School
London Street
New Whittington
Chesterfield
S43 2AQ

Dear Mrs Buxton

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to New Whittington Community Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 30 January 2014, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the findings. 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.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you, the deputy headteacher, the Chair of the Governing Body and another governor, and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The school improvement plan was evaluated. During the visit you joined me on a tour of the school where I spoke informally to pupils about their work. I scrutinised a selection of pupils' books. The single central record was checked.

Context

Since the last section 5 inspection the substantive headteacher has left. The local authority identified a substantive headteacher from a local school to act as

headteacher until the end of the school year. The acting deputy headteacher has been appointed to the substantive position.

Main findings

In the short time you have been acting headteacher you have acted quickly to address the issues raised in the section 5 inspection. Your improvement plan has clear, measurable targets for improving teaching and learning. The governors' role in checking the quality of senior leaders' work is clear in the plan. However, it is not systematic enough to be fully effective.

You have worked with teachers to improve their teaching by changing the way they assess pupils' work and plan their lessons to better meet the needs of different groups of pupils. As a result, pupils are making better progress across the school. Although it is not consistently good in all classes you are aware of the issues and are tackling them robustly. Teaching in mathematics is more systematic and challenging across the school as a result of the effective work carried out by the mathematics subject leader.

Teachers all follow your new marking policy. Consequently, teachers' marking has improved and there is better continuity across the school. Marking now informs pupils clearly of the successes in their learning. Teachers make careful comments about what pupils need to do to improve their work. However, pupils do not have enough time to respond to their teachers' comments and some learning opportunities are missed.

You use a variety of evidence to judge the quality of teaching. You use the information you have to plan professional development that meets the needs of individual teachers. You have strengthened the role of the deputy headteacher so that both of you are checking the progress of pupils closely and challenging teachers to improve their performance. Consequently, the quality of teaching is improving and this is having a positive impact on pupils' outcomes.

The governing body is fully committed to improving its effectiveness. Governors have carried out an audit of skills and are now using these skills to analyse pupils' achievements more effectively. Governors ask challenging questions about the work of senior leaders. They are resolute in pursuing answers and they have a better understanding about how well the pupils are doing. Governors are developing better links with subject leaders so that they are able to find out information for themselves. At this time, opportunities for governors to check for themselves how well pupils are doing are not as well developed as they could be.

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 provided the school with effective support to write the improvement plan. It has increased the amount of time given to the school for staff training, and to work with senior leaders to improve the quality of teaching. It has identified English and mathematics consultants to support subject leaders. It is providing support to the governing body through training to develop their growing understanding of pupils' data. It is also supporting the governing body to appoint a substantive headteacher for September.

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

Yours sincerely

Jan Connor
Her Majesty's Inspector