

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 6799169
Direct email: mathew.mitchell@serco.com



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Simon Thompson
John Clifford Primary School
Nether Street
Beeston
Nottingham
NG9 2AT

Dear Mr Thompson

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to John Clifford Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 11 February 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 December 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:

- amend the school improvement plan so that it lists actions, milestones and staff responsible for monitoring and evaluating actions more clearly
- ensure the improvements made in marking and in the presentation of pupils' work are consistent across the school
- successfully address the slow pace of some lessons, particularly those in guided reading

Evidence

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

plan. You took me on a tour of the school and we made brief visits to a range of classes.

Context

There have been no changes in staff since your recent inspection.

Main findings

There is a wide range of activity underway to address the areas for improvement identified by your most recent inspection.

You now carry out initial assessments of pupils' ability after two weeks rather than waiting until the next scheduled test. This has improved your tracking of the progress made by the many pupils you have who join the school at different points of the year.

Teachers now all use a common lesson planning document which requires that the needs of individual pupils are met, particularly the most able. You have conducted interviews with pupils to find out their opinions on whether lessons are too easy or too difficult, and this helps your teachers choose more appropriate tasks.

All teachers have been formally observed since the inspection and each has been given areas for development which link to necessary improvements identified by your recent inspection. Increasing the pace of some lessons is a priority.

Your recently introduced marking policy has led to improvements in this area, and in the presentation of pupils' work. However, this is not yet consistent across the school. 'Response time' has been introduced to numeracy lessons so that pupils have better opportunities to engage with the feedback teachers give them. You plan to extend this to literacy lessons soon. Your teachers, and those of two local infant schools, have shared best practice in marking.

You have identified teachers who require support in providing opportunities for pupils to apply number skills in a wide range of contexts. This aspect is now emphasised in teachers' planning requirements.

Greater consistency in the teaching of letters and sounds is developing by directing all teachers to use a standardised grid for planning lessons. These documents are checked by school leaders to ensure they are of a good quality. Three teachers benefited from phonics training which was then shared across the school's staff. In school data show an improvement in the phonics achievement of Year 1 pupils.

Governors are well aware of the challenges facing the school. Shortly after the recent inspection, the governing body met to discuss the school's areas for improvement. They were involved in the revisions made to the school's development plan, and are taking an active part in holding the school leaders to account for its

implementation. Seven governors attended meetings to help convey the inspection findings to parents.

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 representative began working with the school in November and already has a good knowledge of the school and its needs. She has arranged support from a well-regarded local school. The representative has also carried out a scrutiny of pupils' work with the school's leaders of literacy and numeracy, and suggested areas for their development in terms of identifying weaknesses when evaluating teaching.

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

Yours sincerely

Ian McNeilly
Her Majesty's Inspector