

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 5307
Email: rachel.evans@tribalgroup.com

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Mrs V Coles
Headteacher
Halcon Community Primary School
Outer Circle
Taunton
TA1 2BU

Dear Mrs Coles

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Halcon Community Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 4 March 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 January 2014. 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

To evaluate the action taken since the last inspection, meetings were held with you, the deputy headteacher, members of the governing body, and the National Leader of Education that has been working with the school. In addition, I undertook a 'learning walk' of the school, looked at a range of pupils' books, and teachers' planning. The school improvement plan was also evaluated.

Context

Since the last section 5 inspection, in January 2014, there have been a number of changes to the membership of the governing body. Several members are new, or

are in a new role. Three have stepped down. You, the deputy headteacher, and the Chair of the Governing Body attended an Ofsted 'Getting to Good' seminar the day before my visit.

Main findings

The leaders and governing body of the school disagree with some of the inspection judgements made at the previous inspection. Nevertheless, you have sustained your vim, focus and aspiration to provide the best education possible for the pupils at Halcon School. The whole school community is not complacent; all are determined to do their best and to raise pupils' achievements. You are using the inspection points for improvement to hone the draft 'overarching' school action plan. Subject leaders have action plans for their own areas of responsibility. These plans are in the process of being reviewed, and aligned with the 'overarching' plan. You have also used the last section 5 report to sharpen the focus on the performance of the more-able pupils. A good example is the increased staff discussion about the more-able pupils during the regularly held pupil progress meetings.

Since the previous inspection, the amount of explicit guidance from teachers has increased. Also, teachers have adapted their lesson planning to ensure that there are more challenging tasks for the most-able pupils. The implementation of these plans is clearly seen in pupils' books. It was pleasing to see that pupils are now writing more frequently and in greater detail and depth than was the case earlier in the year.

Since January 2014, leaders and managers at all levels have been involved in checking pupils' achievement. The leaders for each key stage have produced spread sheets that are displayed in the staff room showing the progress that each more-able pupil is making. This helps to make the data more prominent. It has already increased staff awareness of successes and where progress needs to be accelerated. As part of a programme of involvement, middle leaders are carrying out monitoring and evaluation of their areas. Over the last four weeks the leader for Key Stage 1 has checked the way that teachers mark pupils' mathematics, and literacy books. He has also evaluated the quality of recording in the 'learning journeys' in the Early Years Foundation Stage. He has shared the strengths and areas that could be improved with the teachers concerned and senior leaders. They in turn are using this evaluation to improve their work.

Similarly, the governing body has become more streamlined since the inspection. Training has been undertaken and coaching is planned for those who are new members or who have new roles.

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

Good support has been provided to you and the school by the National Leader of Education over the last two years. The school is already working closely with other schools providing school-to-school improvement support.

The senior leaders of the school have needed to spend considerable amounts of time ensuring that the most vulnerable pupils are kept safe. This time commitment has significantly increased since September 2013. Too many children start the school without having their additional needs correctly identified. Support for these children, and their families, is unnecessarily delayed. The local children's centre, attached nursery and local authority need to work more closely with the school to identify earlier those children at risk and/or those that have special educational needs.

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

Yours sincerely

Steffi Penny
Her Majesty's Inspector