

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



11 March 2014

Mrs J Cerullo
Headteacher
Darenth Community Primary School
Green Street Green Road
Dartford
DA2 8DH

Dear Mrs Cerullo

Requires improvement: second monitoring inspection visit to Darenth Community Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 10 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 second monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in May 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:

- ensure that staff moving into new roles, under the current staffing re-organisation, are crystal clear about what their new job descriptions involve and how closely their existing skills and experience match to them
- focus the regular visits to the school by governors on the key objectives of the school improvement plan.

Evidence

During the visit, I met with you, the subject leaders for English and mathematics, and representatives of the Governing Body and the local authority, to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. I evaluated important documents, including the school improvement plan, minutes of meetings and data showing pupils'

progress. We also toured the school together, watching lessons in each class as well as literacy group teaching.

Main findings

I saw good evidence of improvement in the six months since my last visit. For example, teachers and teaching assistants now work closely and consistently together to provide well-organised group teaching of phonics and literacy. The school's behaviour policy is applied more consistently by staff. All the classrooms, and some outdoor areas, are better organised and more stimulating. In the lessons we observed together, pupils focused appropriately on their work. The school roll is rising. You have good evidence of improving teaching across the school.

You have continued to introduce and develop very strong management systems. You have accurate and well-presented data showing how well pupils are learning in English and mathematics. School self-evaluation is accurate and robust: rightly, you will not say that teaching anywhere in the school is good until you are quite sure that this is consistently the case. Your reports to governors are very clear and well-focused, 'telling us what we need and want to know', as governors put it. The school improvement plan is a useful working document, leading to better teaching and learning. Pupils' attendance is well analysed. You recognise that this is too low; however, it is improving and analysis by pupil groups shows that it is better than the headline data alone indicates.

Your leadership continues to be strong and well-received. Nevertheless, as a new headteacher, you continue to need support and training, which you use well. The school very much depends on you. Other leaders, although working hard with some success, have more to do to become fully effective in their roles. Because of this, Darenth also relies heavily upon support and advice from other schools. This is both useful and proper, but your school needs to build further its own leadership capacity.

Consequently, you have quite rightly instigated a wide-ranging review of the school's staffing structure. You have done this very well – the new roles, structures and emerging job descriptions envisaged for September are well-considered and coherent. We had a useful discussion with your local authority adviser about ensuring that, when existing staff are offered positions in the new structure, you explore with them carefully what their new job descriptions involve, so that there is no misunderstanding. It is also important for each member of staff to evaluate with you how closely their current experience and skills match to the new posts. The local authority has helpfully agreed to support you in this important piece of work. We also discussed how to develop the job descriptions of newly appointed leaders for the Foundation subjects, so that these staff are not simply trained as all-purpose managers but quickly develop their understanding of the specifics of each subject they lead. The local music hub is still not involved in the school.

As a result of all the positive changes you have introduced, pupils' progress continues to improve notably. This is a very complex and mixed picture, especially as new pupils frequently arrive and some pupils leave. You analyse the data about pupils' progress commendably, however, to draw out the key messages. In most cases, in the year groups where pupils entitled to pupil premium funding perform less well than their peers, that gap is closing. Gypsy, Roma and Traveller pupils attain less well than other pupils but their progress is also improving. Despite good teaching and strong pupil progress in Year 6, you do not expect that this year group's results in English and mathematics will reach the government's floor (minimum) targets. This is because these pupils have underachieved lower down in the school. However, you are much more hopeful for the current Year 5 cohort and expect the improvements to continue further still for younger cohorts. We agreed that much will depend on how well the new staffing structure, once established, increases the rate of improvement.

The governing body continues to be an asset. It challenges and supports appropriately; its minutes are well written. There are some governor vacancies but pro-active work means that it is hoped that these will be filled shortly. Some governors visit the school regularly but, as was the case at my last visit, this needs to become more widespread. Governors' visits also should be more closely aligned to the points in the school improvement plan. This should help governors to monitor that plan and give them better first-hand knowledge.

I will maintain contact with the school by telephone and email. 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 continues to support the school astutely and productively. For example, it has brokered much of the support from, and links with, other schools. Its adviser provides experienced and wise guidance to you, staff and governors. Personnel support from the local authority is also very useful and readily available.

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

Yours sincerely

Robin Hammerton
Her Majesty's Inspector