

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 679 9153
Direct email: naik.sandhu@serco.com



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Mr Denis Shiels
Saint Winefride's Catholic Primary School
Britannia Street
Shepshed
Loughborough
Leicestershire
LE12 9AE

Dear Mr Shiels

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Saint Winefride's Catholic Primary School, Shepshed, Leicestershire

Following my visit to your school on 13 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 are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection. The school should take further action to:

- identify measurable targets and points in time to check on the success of school improvement actions to be sure that improvements are happening quickly enough
- ensure the information given to the governing body, leaders of the multi-academy trust and the diocese is clear and precise about the impact of improvement actions so that they can hold leaders to account for the success of their work
- take full advantage of the support and guidance offered by leaders of the multi-academy trust and the diocese.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you, other senior leaders, the governing body, leaders of the multi-academy trust and a representative of the diocese to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The school improvement plan and other school documentation were evaluated. You accompanied me on a tour of the school. We made a brief visit to every classroom. A small sample of pupils' work books was examined and informal discussions were held with pupils. The teaching of the sounds that letters make (phonics) was observed jointly with the leader for the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1.

Context

The Year 2 teacher has been appointed as the leader for the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 since the section 5 inspection. She has also become the leader for mathematics.

Main findings

School staff and members of the governing body have demonstrated their determination to make the necessary improvements to the school. You have begun to strengthen leadership by reorganising leadership roles. The Year 2 teacher now has responsibility for leading the necessary improvements to teaching and achievement in the Early Years Foundation Stage and in Key Stage 1. She is developing her understanding of the areas for development required in teaching and achievement, including the urgent improvements required to the teaching of the sounds that letters make (phonics). Urgent steps are being taken to ensure that she has the knowledge and skills required to carry out her role effectively and to improve her understanding of the way young children learn in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

You have implemented a new system for tracking pupils' progress. The deputy headteacher and the leader for the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 have collaborated to analyse and share information about how well pupils are making progress across the school. The achievement of different groups of pupils is now clear so the support needed to make sure that no pupils get left behind is put in place swiftly. This information is beginning to be used by school leaders to check on the effectiveness of teaching and to hold teachers to account for their work.

You are strengthening the skills of subject leaders, for example, to observe learning in lessons so they can help colleagues improve the impact of their teaching on pupils' progress. You have brokered the support of an external consultant to train leaders and teachers to be able to evaluate pupils' work and use data effectively to improve learning in mathematics. Class teachers have been trained to improve the way they use pupils' assessment information to plan activities that challenge pupils of different abilities to do equally well. You are quite rightly focusing on making sure

that additional adults make a strong contribution to pupils' learning. A new marking policy has been agreed. Teachers have visited other schools to see effective practice in the teaching of phonics and the Early Years Foundation Stage, and to collaborate on the implementation of a new approach to calculation in mathematics. Some urgent decisions remain to be made regarding the detail of how new approaches will be implemented in Saint Winefride's School and to ensure that the monitoring and evaluation of all improvement actions is prompt and thorough.

An external review of the effectiveness of the work of the governing body has been scheduled for April 2014. In the meantime, the Chair of the Governing Body has brokered external support for members of the governing body to improve their understanding of data and the many other ways they can make first hand checks on the work of the school. She has arranged visits to look at effective practice in partnership with members of the governing bodies at other schools in the multi-academy trust. Though she worked with you after the section 5 inspection to formulate the school's action plan, she now understands the plan's shortcomings.

The school's action plan includes the appropriate actions to address the issues which were identified for improvement at the last section 5 inspection and these actions are being carried out. However, the action plan does not set out clear and measurable targets to aim for. It lacks precise timelines to indicate your understanding of the urgency required and there are few points in time identified for school leaders, members of the governing body, and academy and diocese leaders to check that improvements are on track. This lack of precision is reflected in your programme of monitoring and evaluation activities and in the information you present to members of the governing body. This information does not help them to check effectively if improvements are happening quickly enough or to hold you to account for your work.

Ofsted may carry out further visits and, where necessary, provide further support and challenge to the academy until its next section 5 inspection.

External support

You have accessed some, but not all, of the improvement opportunities offered by others, including sharing training and effective practice with other schools. Other valuable support has been offered, such as by the diocese, which you haven't yet taken advantage of.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Leicestershire, the Diocese, and the DfE Academies Advisers Unit.

Yours sincerely

Joanne Harvey
Her Majesty's Inspector