

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



24 March 2014

Mrs Nicky Cunningham
Headteacher
The Waterloo School
Warfield Avenue
Waterlooville
Hampshire
PO7 7JJ

Dear Mrs Cunningham

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to The Waterloo School

Following my visit to your school on 24 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 November 2013. 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. However, since the section 5 inspection governance has not improved quickly enough. The school should take further action to:

- ensure that governors develop greater skills in monitoring the work of the school and holding school leaders to account and that they maintain a sharp and strategic focus on the key areas for improvement in the school
- ensure that plans to improve the school show clearly and precisely how improvements will be monitored and evaluated.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you, the head of school, three members of the governing body, including the Chair of Governors, and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The school improvement plan, governors' monitoring plans and local authority reviews were evaluated. You accompanied me on a tour of the school to visit all classes and I met the staff. I also had a brief meeting with the new headteacher, appointed to start after Easter 2014.

Context

The interim headteacher has been supporting the school for two and a half days a week since October 2013. The deputy headteacher is currently acting Head of School. The interim headteacher is due to leave at Easter and a new headteacher will take up her post at the beginning of the summer term.

Main findings

The interim headteacher has brought stability to the school during an unsettled time. She has ensured more open communication, encouraged a greater sense of purpose and provided clear guidance and support for the Head of School. A cheerful, positive 'can do' attitude among staff and pupils is clearly evident. Staff morale has been boosted and strong relationships with parents have been maintained.

Leadership in the school has been strengthened. An improved streamlined structure has enabled more teachers to take on key leadership responsibilities, work as a team and build on securely good teaching. Leadership has been enhanced further by the development of key roles such as the finance officer and the family support worker. The performance management of staff has been reviewed carefully in the light of the changes in leadership roles.

Plans to improve the school are rooted in an accurate understanding of the strengths in teaching and pupils' achievement. However, the school improvement plan is too general and there is not enough sharp focus on the key areas for improvement identified at the section 5 inspection. The plan includes general statements and questions about how improvements will be monitored, but does not show precisely how monitoring and evaluation will link with staff's training needs or their performance management.

Teaching and pupils' achievement continue to be good. During the monitoring inspection visit, there was clear evidence that pupils are interested in learning and that they make good progress in a stimulating and secure environment. Most classrooms are well-resourced, with helpful displays, a strong focus on developing language and specific spaces dedicated to the learning and emotional needs of the pupils.

School leaders regularly check teaching and routinely follow up any teaching that is less than good, but also provide additional support and coaching to move teaching from good to outstanding. They have also focused on ensuring that teachers' assessments are accurate and that teaching and support staff know what good progress looks like. Staff have visited other schools to observe good practice. Pupil progress meetings now take more account of the bigger picture of pupils' personal development, including their social and emotional resilience and this is leading to a happier atmosphere in the school. Incidents of challenging behaviour are managed calmly and effectively.

Governors are very well-intentioned and passionate in their commitment to the school but valuable time has been lost. The commissioned review of governance was delayed and has only recently taken place. In addition, an unsettled time during gaps in leadership and an understandable focus on the appointment of a new headteacher have distracted the new team of governors from developing a systematic and strategic approach to their roles. Governors spend too much time on operational matters, rather than focusing on how they will tackle the key areas for improvement and hold school leaders to account. For example, governors are able to outline what the additional pupil premium funding has been spent on, but are not able to analyse and evaluate its impact on pupils' progress. Some of the governors' planning has been placed on hold, pending the arrival of the new headteacher, which is slowing the pace of improvement.

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 views the school as a high priority and has worked supportively with school leaders to establish more stability. Local authority officers have an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Further support will be necessary to support the new headteacher and ensure that governors acquire the necessary skills to monitor and challenge the school.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Hampshire and as below.

Yours sincerely

Janet Pearce
Her Majesty's Inspector