

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 3115307
Direct email: rachel.evans@tribalgroup.com



30 April 2014

Ms Karen Salter
The Headteacher
Whitley Park Primary and Nursery School
Brixham Road
Reading
RG2 7RB

Dear Ms Salter

Serious weaknesses first monitoring inspection of Whitley Park Primary and Nursery School

Following my visit to your school on 29 April, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave during the inspection and for the time you made available to discuss the actions which have been taken since the school's recent section 5 inspection.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to have serious weaknesses in December 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

During this inspection, I met with you and your senior leadership team, the Chair of the Governing Body along with one long standing and one newly appointed governor, and a representative of the local authority. The local authority's statement of action and the school's action plans were evaluated. I also made brief visits with you to a number of classrooms where writing was being taught.

Context

Since the last inspection the Vice Chair of the Governing Body has become the Chair of the Governing Body.

The quality of leadership and management at the school

You, your senior leaders and the school's governors are totally dedicated to making the changes that are necessary to improve the school. You have carefully considered which actions will make the biggest difference. You are clear about the order in which you need to make adjustments. You have written two action plans, rightly giving one a mathematics focus and the other a writing focus. They wisely outline how you aim to strengthen leadership in these areas so as to drive improvements forward. However, the plans are not sharp enough in identifying how you will judge the difference that specific actions will make to pupils.

You have appropriately included a separate section in both plans which compares pupils' starting levels, current levels and end-of-year targets. This information is helping you to check whether pupils in each year group are making enough progress. However, the information you are currently using does not compare pupils' levels with the standards expected of pupils of their age. As a result, in some areas, the picture you have of the pupils' achievement is overly positive. Working alongside the local authority adviser, you have recently gathered information which compares pupils' current levels with the expected levels for their ages. You rightly prioritise using this new information with governors, leaders and teachers to raise expectations of what your pupils are capable of achieving.

Governors now meet regularly with senior leaders to check pupils' progress. They ask sharper questions about variations in achievement across classes and year groups. Senior leaders are making more use of information about pupils' achievement to check for improvements in teaching. They are also beginning to train year team leaders to use this information when they check the quality of teaching. However, this work is at an early stage and team leaders do not therefore hold teachers fully to account for the progress that their pupils make. Governors and leaders do not check carefully enough to ensure that different groups of pupils, for example, those eligible for pupil premium funding, make enough progress.

You have made effective use of external and internal support focused on writing. You and your leaders have made well-thought-out changes to the way that writing is being taught. This improvement was evident in most of the classrooms I visited. Nevertheless, not all teachers are providing enough detail when they mark extended writing. This is contributing to inconsistencies in the quality of writing which you and your leaders are determined to eliminate. Spelling errors are not systematically identified in pupils' writing and words spelt incorrectly are displayed on whiteboards. You have just begun to tackle inconsistencies in the teaching of mathematics, but it is too early to evaluate the impact of your actions.

The local authority representative's regular visits to the school mean that he knows the school thoroughly. The evidence from these visits has appropriately formed updates made to the local authority's statement of action. The statement of action matches the school's action plans well. You have wisely used your extensive local knowledge to broker tailor-made support. A wide range of external partners, including local authority advisers and independent consultants, is now working with your school. The broad range of support is currently appropriate and focused on the right areas. The local authority representative is working with you to ensure the support provides a coherent package. You and your leaders are suitably aware of the importance of rigorously checking that this external support is making a positive difference and changing it in line with the changing needs of the school.

Following the monitoring inspection the following judgements were made.

The local authority's statement of action is fit for purpose.

The school's action plans are fit for purpose.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Reading and as below. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Sarah Hubbard
Her Majesty's Inspector