

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 5359
Direct F 0117 315 0430
Email: christina.bannerman@tribalgroup.com

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Bridget Hemmings
Headteacher
Otterhampton Primary School
School Lane
Bridgwater
TA5 2QS

Dear Mrs Hemmings

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Otterhampton Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 20 May 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 17-18 May 2014. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Senior leaders and governors are not taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection. The school should take further action to:

- increase the rigour and frequency of monitoring by senior leaders to ensure that planned initiatives are implemented and are making a difference to pupils' achievement
- ensure governors more closely monitor the effectiveness of the school's action plans by taking a closer account of the progress of different groups of pupils
- develop stronger links with a good or better school to ensure teachers are provided with support to develop the quality of their teaching to good and outstanding.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with headteacher, members of the Governing Body and a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The school improvement plan was evaluated. The inspector and headteacher conducted a learning walk to each classroom and together with the subject leader of mathematics, looked at pupils' work in books.

Context

The school are looking to appoint two new class teachers to start full time in September, one on a temporary contract to cover maternity leave and one permanent contract. Since the previous inspection, one governor has left the governing body.

Main findings

The school's improvement plans set out clearly the actions it will take to address issues identified in the previous inspection. The plans record those responsible and contain a clear sequence of actions spread out over the year that avoids trying to do too much at once. However, some of the planned actions do not record the intended impact on pupils' achievement. This hampers governors in measuring the school's progress and reviewing the appropriateness of the planned actions.

Subject leaders have drawn up individual action plans aimed at increasing opportunities for pupils to develop their mental calculation skills, to ensure that pupils regularly solve mathematical problems and produce extended pieces of writing each week. However, work in pupils' books confirms that the planned actions have not been implemented. Pupils in a number of year groups continue to have limited opportunities to produce extended pieces of writing and across the school there are too few opportunities for pupils to solve mathematical problems and apply their calculation skills.

Governors are receiving regular information on the school's progress from the headteacher and from subject leaders that is helping to provide a more accurate overview of the work of the school. Governors have been assigned different subject areas and have completed visits to the school to independently evaluate the school's progress. At a recent governor meeting the mathematics subject leader outlined the areas for development. The briefing for governors highlighted weaknesses in pupils' mental arithmetic and identified the need to raise attainment at Key stage 1 and improve the progress of lower achievers across years 3-6. However, governors are not yet closely analysing the progress of these identified groups of pupils to evaluate the effectiveness of the school's actions.

A member of staff has attended training aimed at developing the quality of their teaching from good to outstanding. This has been shared with staff and they have been encouraged to use videos of their teaching to analyse their strengths and identify areas for improvement. However, the school's systems to improve the quality of teaching are not as strong as they could be. For example, staff are not currently being provided with coaching and support from a partner school to rapidly develop their practice and improve their teaching to consistently good or better.

Senior leaders have developed systems to regularly record and track pupils' progress. Assessments are gathered half termly and used to more closely monitor the progress of pupils. As a result, teachers are developing a clearer understanding of the standards expected of pupils and how to raise the quality of pupils' work to the next level. Improvements in the frequency and accuracy of assessments have helped to improve the deployment of teaching assistants. Pupil progress meetings are held regularly to identify pupils who are not making expected progress and to check that intervention programmes are making a difference to their achievement. Closer monitoring of support programmes has been particularly effective in helping more able pupils in Year 6. As a result, more pupils are set to reach higher level 6 in mathematics and reading this year.

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 has drawn up an appropriate action plan but has been slow to ensure that support outlined in the plan is implemented. Links with good or better schools are underdeveloped and are not providing teachers with sufficient support to improve their practice. In June, the headteacher is due to meet with the headteacher of a local support school to finalise arrangements to provide support and coaching for individual teachers. The school has commissioned an independent consultant who has provided support for the headteacher and helped to prepare an action plan to address issues identified at the previous inspection. From September, the school intends to commission an additional external consultant to act as a mentor for newly appointed staff and to evaluate their performance.

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

Yours sincerely

Mark Lindfield
Her Majesty's Inspector