

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

6 June 2014

Ms. Gillian Seymour
Headteacher
Checkendon Church of England (A) Primary School
Checkendon
Reading
RG8 0SR

Dear Ms. Gillian Seymour

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Checkendon Church of England (A) Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 5 June 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 March 2014. 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:

- match the questions set by teachers when they mark work more closely to each pupil's needs and ability
- ensure extension activities make a direct contribution to raising pupils' achievement.

Evidence

During the visit, I held meetings with you and your numeracy coordinator, the Chair of the Governing Body and a representative from the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. We visited all the classes in the school with the exception of the Reception class. I also evaluated the action plan.

Context

Since the start of the summer term, the Year3/4 class has had a permanent teacher.

Main findings

You and the school's leaders have taken on board the recommendations from the previous inspection report. You are determined to move the school to good and have carefully considered how this can best be achieved. You have successfully made changes to the mind-set of the school's teachers and governors. There is rightly a greater emphasis on meeting the needs of the most able pupils.

Teachers are planning lessons with the needs of different ability groups in mind, especially the most able pupils. Teachers are giving them stretching and challenging activities. However in some lessons these individual activities are not helping the most able pupils to achieve highly on the main task.

Governors are sensibly continuing to use information on pupils' achievement to hold the school to account. They are now even sharper in the way they focus their scrutiny on whether the achievement of the most able pupils is good enough. The school's governors have high standards. They have visited the school to see it at work and as a result have asked for further improvements to be made.

You and your leaders have set challenging targets for the progress you want pupils to make. You recognise that some pupils need to make very rapid progress in order to reach their true capability. Your information shows that pupils in Year 6 make better progress in mathematics and reading than in writing. Although pupils are now routinely writing at length in different subjects, you know that there is further improvement needed. The local authority has agreed to provide you with support in developing writing.

The way teachers mark pupils' work is more consistent. Specific and detailed comments are given at the end of marked work. These comments clearly link back to the steps to success the pupils were advised to take. Teachers pose questions as part of written comments to ensure that pupils respond to their marking. However these questions are not consistently effective. Teachers need to pay more attention to the abilities of the pupils when they set these questions. For example, some less able pupils do not understand how to respond to more open-ended questions. Consequently these questions are left unanswered and this is not always followed up by the teacher.

Your action plan is detailed and sensibly focuses on the areas for improvement from the last inspection. You are right to outline how you will judge success in terms of the improvements made to outcomes for pupils. You have separate documents that

indicate the results of your monitoring: how effective your actions have been and what, if any, adjustments are needed. It would be even more helpful if these records were attached to the plan. They would enable governors to hold the school to account with even greater rigour.

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 school is supported by a local headteacher who has been commissioned by the local authority. He has made several useful visits to the school. However his support has not yet been evaluated. You would benefit from a formal link with a mentor who is the headteacher of a school in a similar context. The local authority has yet to arrange this. The local authority has agreed to supply the literacy and numeracy support that you have requested. The local authority representative is now much clearer about what support the school requires and the urgency with which it needs to be provided.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Oxfordshire and the Diocese of Oxford.

Yours sincerely

Sarah Hubbard
Her Majesty's Inspector