

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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Linda Mulley
Headteacher
Belvedere Infant School
Mitchell Close
Belvedere
DA17 6AA

Dear Mrs Mulley

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Belvedere Infant School

Following my visit to your school on 3 June 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 section 5 inspection in January 2014 when the school was judged to require improvement. The visit was the first monitoring inspection 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:

- strengthen the school's improvement plan, by including targets that make clear the difference that actions will make to pupils' progress and levels of attainment
- devise a programme of visits for governors that focuses closely on checking the impact of actions from the plan
- measure the progress pupils make over the long term, taking account of the point at which they join the school.

Evidence

During the visit, I met you and other senior leaders as well as two governors and two representatives from the local authority. I evaluated the school improvement plan and looked at a range of other documents. We walked around the school together to see the impact of the changes you have made to pupils' learning. I observed a meeting of the partnership board and briefly met with staff.

Context

Since the inspection two teachers have left. One new member of staff has joined the school and the other class is covered through internal arrangements.

Main findings

The school's improvement plan set out clearly what you intend to do to tackle the areas for improvement. The plan does not have clear targets that show what impact actions are intended to have on increasing the rate of pupils' progress to raise their attainment. Importantly, training for staff to improve their teaching is a key element of the plan. Your expectations are clear and staff are in no doubt that they are accountable for what their children achieve. You have strengthened the system for checking the quality of provision. Subject leaders take a stronger role in checking the quality of teaching, analysing assessment information and presenting their findings to governors. Staff understand how evidence from lesson observations, pupils' work and analysis of pupils' attainment and progress combines together to provide a profile of their teaching. Staff spoke positively of the helpful feedback they receive on what they need to do to improve.

Workshops led by teachers from a local outstanding school have given your staff ideas about how to engage pupils with interesting activities. The results of the pupil survey in the 'effective feedback project' shows that pupils have a better understanding of their own learning. The impact of increased opportunities to practise writing can be seen in pupils' work as well as in the displays of key vocabulary and features of different styles of writing. Changes you have made to the way phonics is taught in the Reception Year are also having a positive impact. I saw children who were confident in using phonics to write simple sentences.

You hold half-termly meetings with each teacher to discuss any pupils that are not making enough progress. At these meetings you devise specific actions for teachers to take in class. Your information shows that pupils are catching up and that, overall, attainment is on track to be better than last year. Although the system to track pupils' progress is helpful in showing their progress from term to term, pupils' progress over the longer term is less clear. It is important that more is expected of those pupils that have underachieved in the past.

Governors have a clear role to check the school's progress on the action plan through termly meetings. Recently, governors have been assigned to oversee key aspects of provision. As yet governors' visits to the school are not programmed in a systematic way to focus on specific areas for improvement or on the impact of actions in the improvement plan.

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

You make effective use of the external support provided through the Bexley Educational Improvement Partnership. The local authority's protocols for supporting the school include half-termly meetings of the partnership board made up of local authority officers, school leaders and governors. Meetings review the school's actions and progress, providing a judicious blend of challenge, support and advice from the local authority for the school's leaders. Officers working with the school know its needs well and have brokered a range of support, including working with local schools that share expertise.

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

Yours sincerely

Jane Wotherspoon
Her Majesty's Inspector