

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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Emma Billington
Headteacher
Earlsmead Primary School
Arundel Drive
Harrow
London
HA2 8PW

Dear Mrs Billington

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Earlsmead Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 17 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 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, governors and the trustees are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection. The school should take further action to:

- sharpen the action plan by identifying regular milestones to judge the success of leaders work and each priority for improvement
- identify more clearly the role of governors and other persons to monitor and evaluate the success of each priority in the action plan
- evaluate the impact of the new behaviour strategies on pupils' attitudes to learning.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you and other senior leaders, the Chair of the Governing Body, a group of teachers, the English and mathematics coordinators and a representative of the local authority to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. You joined me in making visits to lessons and we scrutinised pupils' work. I evaluated the school's action plan and examined other relevant documentation.

Context

A number of changes have occurred since the last inspection. The English and mathematics coordinators are relinquishing their posts. From September 2014, a classroom teacher is to be promoted as the interim English coordinator and the assistant headteacher will take on the mathematics coordinator's role. A physical education teacher has been appointed and a Year 3 class is temporarily being taught by another member of staff. Three new teachers have been appointed to replace the six teachers who are leaving at the end of this academic year.

Main findings

The school's plan outlines the key actions required to address the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. It has realistic deadlines to gauge improvement and identifies the persons responsible for overseeing each action. Nonetheless, the plan does not have interim measures of success for each priority to help leaders check the effectiveness of improvements at short intervals. Furthermore, the persons responsible for monitoring and evaluating the impact of actions are not clearly identified. This makes it difficult for you and the governing body to hold staff fully to account.

You have changed the way staff and teaching assistants mark pupils' work. This is ensuring that pupils receive feedback about the next steps they need to take to improve their learning. Teachers are setting aside time to give pupils more opportunities to respond to their feedback. You have introduced the use of a purple pen for staff to correct pupils' work so you know whether pupils' progress is being assessed effectively during lessons. This way of marking is improving pupils' learning.

Teachers have received training on how to plan work that is matched to pupils' different abilities. In mathematics lessons most teachers use different success criteria linked to pupils' abilities to set different pieces of work to challenge pupils' mathematics knowledge. The same is true in writing lessons to support pupils to write more extensively. The result of this is that teachers are beginning to provide work which suitably challenges pupils of all abilities, particularly the most able.

Plans have been produced to provide pupils with more opportunities to use their writing skills in other subjects. The priorities in the plan actions include teachers

giving pupils a specific grammar target and a writing target for each topic they learn in all subjects. You have rightly decided to pilot these new initiatives in Years 2 and 3 before they are implemented by all teachers. This is to assess how they can be used in lessons across the school more effectively.

The leader responsible for monitoring pupils' behaviour is improving the school's behavioural procedures. Teachers can now quickly notify senior leaders if they need additional support to manage pupils' behaviour during lessons. Posters which show features of good behaviour are displayed in classrooms. Nonetheless, you recognise the need to evaluate the impact of these changes so you can assess whether these initiatives are improving pupils' attitudes to learning.

Leaders' understanding of the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement is improving. This is because you and your leaders are monitoring these aspects by scrutinising work in pupils' books weekly and feeding back strengths and improvements to teachers. This is also supporting you to hold teachers to account for their performance. Information from the scrutiny of pupils' work and progress is used to feedback development points to teachers so that appropriate support can be provided to improve their teaching. The English and mathematics coordinators are having weekly meetings with senior leaders which is improving their leadership skills. Teachers are also held to account for the performance of the different groups of pupils they teach through termly reviews of pupils' progress.

The review of governance has been completed. As a result, governors have devised a good quality action plan to inform improvement. Governors' understanding of their roles and responsibilities are also improving. Two members now monitor the impact of leaders work on the learning of vulnerable pupils including those who are eligible for additional government funding. Governors are in the process of appointing a clerk to the governing body to improve how governors' meetings are recorded.

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 officer provides effective support and has linked the school with three local schools judged to be good or outstanding to share good practice. This is especially helping to develop pupils' mathematics and extended writing.

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

Yours sincerely

Pamela Fearnley
Her Majesty's Inspector