

Serco Inspections
Colmore Plaza
20 Colmore Circus Queensway
Birmingham
B4 6AT

T 0300 123 1231
Text Phone: 0161 6188524
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk

Direct T: 0121 6799169
Direct email:
mathew.mitchell@serco.com



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Gabe Somes
Headteacher
St Margaret of Scotland Catholic Primary School
Rotheram Avenue
Luton
Bedfordshire
LU1 5PP

Dear Mrs Somes

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to St Margaret of Scotland Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 26 June 2014, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection 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 as follows:

- Ensure that all staff are familiar with the school improvement plan so that they understand their contribution towards achieving the goals.
- Strengthen leadership and management of mathematics and literacy.
- Check that targets for pupils in Key Stage 1 are sufficiently challenging.
- In monitoring mathematics and writing, focus on the subject elements that lead to pupils' good progress or hinder it and use this information to develop the expertise of staff.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with you, the assistant headteacher, governors and a representative from the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The school improvement plan and action plan were

evaluated. You took me on a tour of the school. We discussed the school's latest data on pupils' achievement. I looked at a small sample of pupils' written work from different year groups.

Context

Since the last inspection you have been appointed as substantive headteacher, and one of the assistant headteachers has been released from responsibility for teaching a class. Two teachers have left the school and they have been replaced. The leadership team has been restructured with four assistant headteachers in post from September. An acting special needs coordinator has been appointed. Year leader roles have been reallocated from September. A standards improvement board (SIB) is in place to monitor the school's progress.

Main findings

Following an extensive period of turbulence with high staff turnover, you and the governing body have stabilised staffing. From September 2014 the school will be fully staffed, with the exception of the vacancy for a deputy headteacher. The new leadership team has strengthened the school's capacity to make the necessary changes quickly and move the school to good. You communicate your vision for the school well and you know what needs to be done to tackle weaknesses. The school improvement plan is a useful tool to guide bring about rapid change. It is clear, succinct and actions are closely aligned to pupils' achievement although targets for pupils' progress in Key Stage 1 could be more ambitious. It will be important to share the plan with all staff so that everyone understands their contribution towards achieving the goals. You have refocused the school by making pupils' learning and their health, welfare and safety the top priorities. Information about pupils' achievement is accurate and staff have confidence in the data because you have involved professionals outside the school to check the judgements. This has established a secure baseline as a starting point from which to measure pupils' progress from September. You have increased the accountability of staff through regular meetings about pupils' achievement attended by senior staff and governors. Everyone is keen to make improvements and raise standards.

The quality of teaching generally is improving because you have communicated clear expectations and set minimum requirements for staff to keep to. You and the assistant headteacher drop in to lessons frequently to check for improvements. The governors have supported you in addressing weaknesses through coaching, training and formal systems for managing teachers' performance. The school's data show that writing and mathematics are the two weakest areas of pupils' learning. Leadership of these subjects is not as strong as it needs to be to find out which elements of each subject are holding back pupils' progress. When these are identified, targeted training for staff can be designed to improve their teaching.

Through regular visits and examination of the school's data, governors and members of the SIB know the school well. They know how far the school has come in making improvements, where it needs to get to and how to get there. Governors have rightly focused on recruiting a strong team to lead the school forward. The governing body has plans to encourage more families who are eligible for free school meals to apply. It manages the additional government funding for these pupils suitably to promote their better learning. The SIB works closely with the governing body and adds a further layer of support and challenge for school leaders.

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 provides an appropriate level of support in relation to the school's needs. It has been especially helpful in seeking the right advisers, consultants and other professionals to work with staff and support key leaders. The governing body has received help with recruitment, complex personnel issues and governor training. As a consequence, the school is stable and is moving confidently forward on its journey to good and beyond.

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

Yours sincerely

Linda Killman
Her Majesty's Inspector