

Tribal  
1-4 Portland Square  
Bristol  
BS2 8RR

T 0300 123 1231  
Text Phone: 0161 6188524  
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk  
[www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

**Direct T** 0117 311 5359  
**Direct F** 0117 315 0430  
**Email:** christina.bannerman@tribalgroup.com

23 June 2014

John Draper  
Headteacher  
Swaythling Primary School  
Mayfield Road  
Southampton  
SO17 3SZ

Dear Mr Draper

**Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Swaythling Primary School**

Following my visit to your school on 20 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 and governors are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement.

The school should take further action to:

- Ensure that the next version of the school's improvement plan:
  - relates directly, and in detail, to the precise areas for improvement identified in the inspection report
  - provides clear, practical direction for staff about the actions they are responsible to take and the training and development they will receive
  - provides information for governors about the activities they will undertake to check that actions have been completed, and how they will recognise and measure improvement.

- Ensure that judgements made about the quality of teaching consider:
  - how accurately teachers measure pupils' progress, and how they use this information when they plan lessons
  - how well marking is supporting pupils' progress
  - the progress that different groups of pupils are making.
  
- The local authority should take further action to:
  - maintain a high level of challenge so that the school maintains a sharp focus on the areas identified for improvement
  - support the school to develop its senior leadership and the way in which governors hold the school to account.

## **Evidence**

During the visit, I met with you and we visited all the classrooms together. I met with the Chair of the Governing Body and another governor and with a representative from the local authority. I examined a range of documentation including the school's improvement plans, governing body records, and some examples of pupils' exercise books.

## **Context**

At Easter, a newly qualified teacher (NQT) took over as the class teacher in Year 3. The post-holder has moved into teaching outside the classroom until they leave the school at the end of term. The deputy headteacher and 2 other class teachers will also leave at the end of the school year. The school has recruited a new deputy headteacher and 2 further NQTs to start in September. The Key Stage 2 leader is currently absent due to extended jury service. The special educational needs co-ordinator is due to return from a period of leave before the end of the school year. The Chair of the Governing Body is due to step down at the end of the school year.

## **Main findings**

Your appointment of a new deputy headteacher with experience in supporting other staff, is a sign of your commitment to improve the quality of teaching. You are already planning thoughtfully with the new deputy headteacher for the induction of other new teachers in September. This demonstrates your determined approach to securing the best possible quality of teaching, right from the start of the new school year. You are appropriately alert to the needs of the new deputy headteacher for their own induction, and support in their new role.

You have made intelligent links between a number of the areas for improvement identified in the inspection report, and the weaknesses you had already identified in the way the school measures and records pupils' progress. As a result, you have

checked the accuracy of teachers' assessments and arranged for advice from other schools where more reliable ways of working are already in place.

To support you in holding teachers to account for their pupils' progress, you have arranged for consultants to check your judgements about the quality of teaching. Consultants have also worked with you and the new deputy headteacher to ensure that your evaluations are consistent. You have reviewed your method for observing in classrooms and introduced an improved format for recording this activity. This ensures that judgements are now made with reference to the Ofsted criteria for 'good' teaching, and that these are communicated to teachers clearly and with relevant advice about their next steps. However, the record sheet is unnecessarily complex, and recent lesson observations have not focussed sharply enough on the specific areas for improvement identified in the inspection report.

You have taken positive steps to consider wider information before you make a judgement about how good teaching in the school is. This includes looking at pupils' work and considering information about their progress. Senior teachers have had some opportunities to visit other classrooms, look at pupils' work and provide feedback to the teachers in their teams. However, this has not been systematic enough to allow these leaders to have the impact their roles require.

You have reviewed the school's marking policy. This now includes a straightforward system of symbols and pictures. The policy is displayed prominently in most classrooms and is used more consistently by teachers. Sometimes however, the teacher's comments are untidily written or hard to read. This is not a helpful model for the improved presentation of work, which you are promoting.

You have created a relevant plan to steer school improvement, in consultation with the local authority. Although this links with the areas for action in the inspection report, and includes suitable targets for progress in Years 3, 4, 5 and 6, progress targets for younger pupils are missing. The document also lacks detailed plans to support staff in knowing exactly what action they are expected to take so that teaching improves, and the training they can expect. Information is also missing about how governors will check that actions have been completed, and how they will recognise and measure improvement.

It is good to see that you have been clear with staff, about the need to de-clutter classrooms and to improve the environment for learning. You have required senior teachers to model the standard you want to see. As a result, relevant displays to support pupils' learning in mathematics and English are now evident in all the classrooms, although their quality is not yet consistent. Storage has been organised more tidily. However, there is much more still to do, so that learning, rather than equipment and resources, stands out in classrooms and around the school.

A useful review of governance has started, and a meeting is planned soon, to reflect on the detailed self-evaluation which governors have completed. The local authority has arranged for a suitably qualified consultant to lead this review, and his recent communication gives credit to governors' "willingness to engage" in the process. Consideration of a new Chair of the Governing Body is a feature of the review.

Governors value the established strengths of the school. They also accept that key aspects now need to improve and that the governing body should hold the school's leaders more firmly to account. Governors have not been visiting the school regularly enough to check, for themselves, the information provided to them by the headteacher. There are plans to increase the frequency and focus of their visits to the school, although these have not yet been acted upon. Records of meetings show governors receiving broad reports about pupils' progress and asking relevant questions. Governors are aware that the accuracy of this information needs to improve, before it can be relied upon.

### **External support**

The local authority has arranged for suitable consultant support at no cost to the school. This has focussed on identifying, with you, strengths and weaknesses in teaching. As a result, helpful coaching for individual staff has been provided from a local 'teaching school'. A senior local authority consultant has worked with you to develop the school's improvement plans. The local authority is planning a full review of the school's progress in the autumn term.

Ofsted may carry out further visits and, where necessary, provide further support and challenge to the school until its next section 5 inspection.

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

Yours sincerely

Siân Thornton  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**