

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

25 June 2014

Mrs Susie Bagnall
Headteacher
St Ebbe's Church of England Aided Primary School
Whitehouse Road
Oxford
OX1 4NA

Dear Mrs Bagnall

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to St Ebbe's Church of England Aided Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 24 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 third monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in March 2013. 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.

Evidence

During the visit, I met with you, other senior leaders, members of the governing body, representatives of the local authority and of the Diocese, and members of the school council, to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. I observed teaching in all classrooms, looked at pupils' work in a range of books, and read documents relating to school improvement, such as reports to the governing body and records of the monitoring of teaching.

Main findings

Since my last visit there has been a distinct change in how you and your senior leaders approach school improvement. You are now a united and determined team. You have shown great resilience in responding to the findings of my previous visit, after which you re-grouped and tackled significant weaknesses with renewed rigour. Teaching and learning are improving because leadership is better focused and more demanding. Variations in learning remain, but you and your senior team know what they are and are tackling them resolutely. Amongst teachers, there is a collective will to listen to advice and to improve, in contrast to past resistance.

Governors have been instrumental in improving leadership. They scrutinise progress reports carefully and have required changes where they are not clear or consistent enough. They question what actions are being taken to follow up on weaknesses in teaching and check on their impact. They have been commended by the local authority for their high attendance at governor training events. This is indicative of their determination to be skilled and effective in holding the school to account. They understand teacher assessment information and demand a clear analysis of it by groups; they know, for example, how well children eligible for free school meals are doing. They check to make sure that funding to support these pupils is used to good effect.

Members of the school council were astute in their comments about what is changing for the better. They feel challenged to achieve more; Year 5 and 6 pupils especially like their new mathematics groups. They say that they are working harder, at a more demanding level, compared to mathematics lessons in the past often being 'too hard or too easy'. Observations of these lessons confirmed pupils' views that they are learning well and being stretched more. They explain their work using mathematical terms with confidence. They are aware of the level they are working at and how to move to the next stage of learning. Teachers and teaching assistants keep a close eye on individuals to make sure they are grasping key concepts, then moving on to develop new skills.

Marking is improving and is now having a positive impact on learning. Teachers' are more consistent in giving feedback and make sure that pupils use their advice to improve their work. Senior leaders check books rigorously and often, and follow up any weaknesses. The best marking is now used as a model to set higher expectations and teachers are rising to this.

In almost all classrooms visited, learning was productive and lively. Year 2 children gave thoughtful feedback to the teacher on their mathematics. They confidently explained the wide range of methods they had used to tackle mathematical problems, and showed a growing understanding of how to choose the most efficient one. In a lesson on descriptive writing, they could read and identify features of

language, such as simile or alliteration, then invent examples to enliven their own writing. Older children talked animatedly about their study of Shakespeare. They used ambitious vocabulary to capture their developing understanding of character in *Macbeth* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

The renewed energy and confidence that is driving these improvements is complemented by a sharper evaluation of how well the school is performing. You and your team are not complacent. You understand the need to sustain the pace of improvement for the school to achieve a judgement of 'good' at its next inspection.

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 associate headteacher appointed by the local authority has been a significant strength. He has been unequivocal in pointing to weaknesses and his objective perspective has helped you sharpen practice. He also considers leadership to be 'massively improved' since the last monitoring visit and is now able to reduce the level of support he offers. Visits to his and other highly successful schools have helped inform your practice and inspired positive developments.

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

Christine Raeside
Her Majesty's Inspector