

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](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

Direct T: 0121 679 9166  
Direct email: helen.johnson@serco.com



18 December 2013

Mrs Carey Ayres  
Acting Headteacher  
Mill Hill School  
Peasehill  
DE5 3JQ

Dear Mrs Ayres

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Mill Hill School**

Following my visit to your school on 17 December 2013, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the findings of my visit. 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 October 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. The school should take further action to:

- ensure that the school improvement plan identifies suitable individuals to monitor and evaluate each action
- improve further the accuracy of assessment and tracking information so that it is consistent and reliable across the school.

### **Evidence**

During the visit, meetings were held with you, other senior leaders, the governing body and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The school improvement plans were evaluated. Meetings were also held with the subject leaders of mathematics and English to evaluate their effectiveness. A tour of the school was carried out with you, during which some students were spoken with about their learning and progress and students' work books were examined.

## **Context**

At the time of this visit, the school is being led by an acting headteacher, and a new Chair of the Governing Body has been appointed.

## **Main findings**

The acting headteacher and other leaders have wasted no time in addressing the areas for improvement identified in the section 5 report. The school improvement plan is correctly focused on improving the quality of teaching and leadership at all levels; the planned actions are comprehensive and detailed. The plans, however, do not always clearly identify who is to monitor and evaluate the actions; sometimes the same person is doing both activities, which means it is difficult to effectively evaluate the success of plans. Recent whole-staff training and development activities and the introduction of a 'teaching and learning group' have already had a positive impact in the classroom. For example, there is greater consistency seen in the quality of marking and feedback in students' workbooks. Learning tasks, however, do not always match the ability of students. Leaders have planned further training for staff on this area of teaching. Leaders have recently revised assessment and tracking systems to address inconsistencies across the school. This does not involve subject areas sharing good practice to improve the reliability of students' assessment data.

Subject leadership in mathematics and English is improving; monitoring tasks are carried out diligently. The subject leader for English is now part of the leadership team to help her develop her role and ensure expert contributions to strategic decisions. The school has not utilised the skills of these subject leaders to improve practice of other middle leaders. Appropriate members of staff, including the acting headteacher, have been enrolled onto accredited leadership and improving teaching programmes to further improve practice.

Governors have a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. They are taking steps to further develop their monitoring role, so that they can hold leaders to account more effectively. The acting headteacher is hardworking and capable; she has brought important stability to the school by developing a culture of transparency and trust amongst staff.

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 has brokered some partnerships with other schools. The school improvement partner has supported the acting headteacher and governors through the recent leadership instability. The school has enhanced its existing links with

outstanding providers and enlisted the services of external consultants to help validate its self-evaluation.

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

Yours sincerely

Zarina Connolly  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**