

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 679 9168
Direct email:
narinder.kurana@serco.com

David Cates
Headteacher
Riddings Junior School
Church Street
Riddings
Alfreton
Derbyshire
DE55 4BW

Dear Mr Cates

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Riddings Junior School

Following my visit to your school on 15 July 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 second monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in December 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 school leaders have clear strategic planning which addresses all of the actions from the last monitoring visit in February 2014, specifically around sharpening performance management targets for staff and improving use of the pupil premium funding
- use the views of pupils to help shape subject development and extra-curricular provision, particularly in the arts and sports
- ensure that resources are adequate for all subjects and make better use of existing resources, such as mathematical equipment and creative resources.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with the headteacher, other senior leaders, a sample of teaching assistants, a group of pupils representing all year groups, the Chair of the Governing Body and a senior school improvement advisor of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. A tour of the school and all classrooms was undertaken with the headteacher. The vast majority of Year 6 pupils were not in school on the day of the monitoring visit. The outcomes of the school's own monitoring activities, particularly in relation to teaching, were discussed. The inspector was unable to evaluate a school action plan, as currently there is no such plan in place.

Context

Immediately following the last monitoring visit in February 2014, a new headteacher was appointed to the school. There have been several resignations from and appointments to the governing body. This includes the Chair of the Governing Body. The five new governors include a local authority governor, a community governor and three new parent governors.

Main findings

There are signs that changes in leadership, including the new headteacher and the Chair of the Governing Body, are beginning to make a positive difference to school improvement. The new head is successfully creating a stronger team of staff around him. Higher expectations for teaching and learning are evident. Pupils understand their personal targets and they are now clearer about the purpose of each lesson. They are increasing their ability to evaluate their own work. Pupils' behaviour is better managed than previously. Consequently, there is very little disruption to learning. Pupils who experience difficulty with behaving well are effectively supported.

The new headteacher has made noticeable changes to the timings of the school day. Pupils enter school slightly earlier in the mornings, giving them more time to respond to the teachers' comments in their books and be settled and ready for learning. They also have two additional lessons each week as assemblies are now only held on alternate days. Pupils say they approve of this additional time and that it is helping their progress. Pupils also state that they enjoy school more than they used to; they approve of the harder work they are now set. They are taking more pride in their appearance and in their work. Whilst presentation and handwriting in books has undoubtedly improved, there are still some inconsistencies in the way that this is taught and how expectations are upheld.

The quality of teaching has improved. Any inconsistencies have been identified and staff are effectively supported. Classrooms are more orderly and the quality of displays has improved. An agreed approach to lesson planning has been

implemented. School leaders check that activities are adapted well to meet the wide range of pupils' needs within the class. Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs are more fully integrated with other pupils in activities than previously and there is better consideration of equality for all individual pupils. The good teaching practice that exists in school has been shared. There is now regular moderation of work in pupils' books, including marking and pupil progress. However, there are still inconsistencies in the progress and achievement of different groups of pupils across Years 3, 4 and 5. Pupils in Year 6 have made good progress this year due to the consistently good teaching they have received. Therefore, Year 6 pupils' attainment is now significantly higher in reading, writing and mathematics. Progress in their spelling and grammar has been phenomenal. The school has met its targets for pupils' progress in line with national expectations, but it has not done enough to accelerate pupils' progress further than this to ensure that pupils in school are catching up with the attainment of pupils in other schools nationally. Writing remains the weakest subject across the school.

Two thirds of pupils are eligible for the pupil premium, which is the additional government funding provided to ensure that those likely to underachieve perform as well as other pupils. However, pupils eligible for this funding are not doing as well as other pupils in school, with the exception of those in Year 6. The school is still doing too little to ensure it spends the additional funding wisely. School leaders are not checking the impact of any additional support given to individuals and groups of pupils rigorously.

The school is short of resources in some subject areas. The range of reading material is limited and some books are of poor quality or not in good condition. This has a negative impact on pupils' enthusiasm for reading. Pupils say they do not use the available technology, including laptops and tablets, frequently enough to enhance their learning across a range of subjects. Many of the art and mathematical resources are too rarely used. The curriculum is too narrow and very few pupils learn to play musical instruments, although many express their desire to do so. They enjoy sport and recognise the additional benefits of specialist coaching made possible by additional primary sports funding. However, pupils have not been consulted on additional sports they wish to take part in, which has an impact on overall participation rates.

Not all adults in school sufficiently understand their role in school improvement. This is because they have not been part of school self-evaluation and there is no action plan in place to guide staff's work. It is critical to school improvement that a full plan is developed and shared with all staff and leaders, and that progress against it is evaluated. Staff targets this year are still not precise enough and not, as yet, matched to the needs of the pupils in their class or to whom they provide support. Plans are in place to change this from the new academic year and to ensure that every member of staff is held to account for pupils making accelerated progress and improving standards.

The governing body has undergone an external review of governance since the last monitoring visit. The work of the governing body is strategically planned and underpinned by an appropriate governors' action plan. Governor meetings are sharply focussed and there is increasing challenge made to senior leaders during these meetings and the regular meetings between the Chair of the Governing Body and the headteacher. The governing body has successfully recruited and filled all of the vacancies. Roles and responsibilities are currently being reviewed during its reconstitution. Appropriate arrangements are in place to thoroughly induct and train new governors.

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 school was correctly prioritised by the local authority as needing a high level of support. Consequently it has received regular high quality support from the local authority which has helped to improve teaching and leadership. However, the school improvement service has not ensured that leaders have defined the school's strategic direction clearly enough through precise up-to-date action planning.

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

Yours sincerely

Jane Melbourne
Her Majesty's Inspector