

Tribal
Kings Orchard
1 Queens Street
Bristol, BS2 0HQ

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

Direct T 0117 311 5323
Email: suzy.smith@tribalgroup.com

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Mrs Delaney-White
St Edmund's Catholic Primary School
Radley Road
Abingdon
OX14 3PP

Dear Mrs Delaney White

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to St Edmund's Catholic Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 22 September 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 second monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in February 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 to:

- improve the way teachers use information from marking when planning so that they set work that meets the needs of all pupils, whatever their ability
- ensure subject leaders make regular checks on the quality of teaching in the subjects they manage and use those checks to give teachers the specific support they need to improve.

Evidence

During the visit, I held meetings with you, the subject leaders for literacy and numeracy, the Chair of Governors, a local authority representative, the headteacher of Thomas Reade Primary School and a representative from the diocese, to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. I evaluated your most recent

development plan. You accompanied me on short visit to Reception, all classes in Key Stage 1 and some classes in Key Stage 2, during which we scrutinised pupils' books.

Context

New literacy and numeracy subject leaders were appointed in September 2014.

Main findings

You have been rigorous in taking the actions necessary to improve the school. You regularly check the impact of the changes you make. When checks show that more needs to be done, you have resolutely risen to the challenge. Root and branch changes have been made to how teachers and their assistants are used. The improvement plan clearly details these adjustments and the governors' roles in continuously monitoring the plan.

The Chair of Governors has sharply evaluated the quality of teaching and its impact on pupils' progress. She has rightly judged that although some improvements have been made, there is still too much inconsistency in the progress that pupils make in Key Stage 1. The governing body has taken on board the recommendations of the review of governance. Following the review, a committee which focuses solely on teaching and learning was set up. This committee has ensured that information provided by school includes details about the progress of different groups of students, including those eligible for additional pupil premium funding.

The quality of teaching in the Reception class is improving. There are well thought-out opportunities for children to practise forming the shape of letters. Lesson planning is detailed and identifies clearly how learning and progress will be assessed. The plans rightly indicate how teaching assistants will work with small groups of children involved in play to help them learn. However, teaching assistants do not consistently have the impact planned because they are not managing the challenging behaviour shown by a small minority of children.

The quality of teaching in Key Stage 2 has improved more rapidly than in Key Stage 1. In most Key Stage 2 classes visited, teachers closely questioned pupils to check they are clear about what they are learning and how to achieve highly. In many classes in Key Stage 2 the tasks set now offer an appropriate level of challenge. In Year 3 for instance, the needs of the most able pupils were being well supported by a teaching assistant. They were using playing cards to help them work out which 3 numbers added up to 20. The task incorporated sequencing and other skills so the pupils needed to concentrate hard and stretch themselves.

In Key Stage 1 the quality of teaching is still too variable. Teachers missed opportunities to connect calculations with real life problems. Teaching assistants

were not always actively involved in supporting and challenging students to make rapid progress. Some of the mathematics work in Year 2 books was not suitable for, or understood by, less able students and as a result they were getting most of the answers wrong. In Year 1 the teacher showed all the pupils how to form the shape of the letters they were sounding out so they missed the opportunity to work it out for themselves.

Teachers in Key Stage 1 and 2 are now consistently following the school's revised marking policy. When teachers mark work, they identify what pupils need to do to improve their next piece of work and pose challenging questions. However, pupils do not always respond to the questions posed which reduces their effect.

The new literacy and numeracy subject leaders have been in post for three weeks. They understand that checking the quality of teaching and giving teachers feedback and well-focused advice is crucial. This aspect of their role so far is underdeveloped.

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 provided a grant to make improvements to the environment in the Reception class area and brokered effective support from the headteacher of a nearby school. The headteacher of Thomas Reade Primary School has helped to train staff in a timely and efficient manner. He has helped teachers to use information from their tracking of pupils' progress to plan more effectively. He has also pledged further training for the Reception class and Key Stage 1 teachers to develop a more consistent approach to deploying teaching assistants. Teachers from Thomas Reade School have planned lessons with your teachers to share what works well. The support from the diocese has been limited. The representative from the diocese has promised to help you better meet the needs of pupils who do not speak English as their first language.

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

Yours sincerely

Sarah Hubbard
Her Majesty's Inspector