

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 9161
Direct email: ann.morris@serco.com

17 October 2014

Julie Witteridge
Headteacher
The White Bridge Junior School
Greensted Road
Loughton
IG10 3DR

Dear Ms Witteridge

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to The White Bridge Junior School

Following my visit to your school on 16 October 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 first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in June 2014. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. At its previous section 5 inspection the school was also judged to require improvement.

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:

- raise teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve in their writing so that basic errors are tackled quickly and pupils make more rapid progress
- improve the accuracy of teachers' assessment in writing.

Evidence

During the visit I held meetings with you, the deputy head teacher, a member of the governing body and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. I also had a telephone meeting with the Chair of the Governing Body. I evaluated the school's improvement plan and its assessment

information. In addition, I looked at a sample of pupils' writing. You accompanied me during visits to all classes in the school where we observed teaching and looked at pupils' work.

Context

Since the inspection one teacher has reduced the number of hours worked each week. A new teacher started work at the school on a temporary basis in September. The school is in the process of amalgamating with White Bridge Infant School. The current executive head teacher has been appointed as head teacher of the primary school that will result from the amalgamation.

Main findings

Your improvement plan is clear and sets out your priorities well. Teaching is improving across the school and you have a clear understanding of what the school does well and where improvement is needed. You have rightly identified writing as the main focus of your improvement work, as standards in this aspect are lower than they are for reading and mathematics in all year groups. There are signs of progress in writing but inconsistencies remain. In one Year 6 class, for example, pupils are making good progress because they have a very clear idea about what they need to do in order to improve. Teaching ensures that pupils are very involved in improving their own work. For example, the teacher has recently asked these pupils to leave a space between each line of their writing so that they can more easily identify errors and edit and improve their work. The pupils have responded well to this strategy, and are keen to spot where they can make their work better.

This focus on improvement is not the case in all classes, and some pupils have little understanding about how they can make their writing better. The targets that most teachers are currently setting are too broad and present pupils with a lengthy list of things that they need to do. Few pupils can explain how these targets support them in their learning and some are unaware of them. As a result of the broad set of targets, some basic errors such as full stops and capital letters or poor handwriting go unchecked.

Teachers' assessment of pupils' writing is variable. A scrutiny of pupils' writing showed that teachers are assessing pupils work at the same level when, in reality, the quality of their work is very different. One pupil, for example, was writing complex sentences and varying her style to suit the audience; punctuation and spelling were accurate and her handwriting was very good. Another pupil, assessed at the same level, wrote very simple sentences with little punctuation and a low standard of handwriting. Such differences need to be ironed out quickly so that teachers and leaders can be more confident in teachers' assessment.

Standards in reading and mathematics for the Year 6 pupils who left the school in the summer term were broadly in line with national averages. Standards in writing were below average. From your analysis of these results you know that pupils'

spelling is particularly weak. You have acted quickly to tackle this: The way that spelling is being taught is more structured now but it is clear from pupils' work that more still needs to be done.

Your analysis also showed you that pupils eligible for the pupil premium are not achieving as well as other pupils. In September you changed the way that this group of pupils are supported, providing more appropriate interventions that better match their needs. At this stage, it is too early to assess the impact of the changes that you have made.

Governors are increasingly aware of the school's progress and are making better use of assessment information to evaluate the impact of the school's improvement strategies. Governors know that writing is the priority and have begun to make visits to monitor progress in this subject. These visits include looking at pupils' work in their books and observing teaching.

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 is providing the school with an appropriate level of support. Since the inspection the school has been invited to participate in a school improvement project aimed specifically at schools which require improvement. This has not yet started. A local authority advisor is in the process of reviewing the school's data.

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

Yours sincerely

Christopher Moodie
Her Majesty's Inspector