

Tribal
Kings Orchard
One Queen Street
Bristol
BS2 0HQ

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

Direct T 0117 311 5359
Email: christina.bannerman@tribalgroup.com

11 November 2014

Mrs F Nation
Headteacher
Herne Bay Junior School
Kings Road
Herne Bay
Kent
CT6 5DA

Dear Mrs Nation

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Herne Bay Junior School

Following my visit to your school on Monday 10 November 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 March 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:

- sharpen the school development plan by focusing your actions more on teaching and learning, redoubling the work on mathematics, and including clear, measurable milestones which relate to pupil outcomes.

Evidence

During the inspection I met with you and your deputy headteacher, some middle leaders, including the leads for English, mathematics and science, your assistant headteacher, who is also the special educational needs co-ordinator, and two members of the governing body to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. I spoke to a representative from the local authority on the phone. We visited

classrooms together, during which I observed some teaching, looked at work in pupils' books and discussed with pupils what they were learning. I also scrutinised a range of documents, including minutes from a recent governors' meeting, a headteacher's report to the governors and visit reports completed by advisers from the local authority. I evaluated the revised school improvement plan.

Context

You took up the post of headteacher at the school in September. A new lead for English joined the school at the same time, along with three other newly qualified teachers.

Main findings

Since your arrival there has been increased impetus and energy to the work being done to improve the school. Leaders at all levels have responded positively to your high expectations and drive to get things done. As a result staff already feel more confident about what they are doing and empowered by the responsibility that you have given them.

Your vision for a rich, balanced, but challenging curriculum is shared by other leaders. When necessary, you have taken difficult decisions to make your vision a reality. For example, the restructuring of the 'Learning and Family Support' department has freed up money to significantly improve the provision for all pupils at the school. You have employed music and physical education specialists to work with all classes. This has raised the profile of the foundation subjects as well as improving the quality of teaching for pupils overall. You have also improved how children with disabilities or special educational needs are supported with their learning, by ensuring they are in class more during English and mathematics lessons.

Middle leaders continue to develop their roles well under your guidance. They are beginning to understand the strengths and weaknesses in their subjects better and are clearer about their responsibilities. They are relishing the challenge you are providing and feel supported in developing their roles further. There is still some way to go, however, before they are effective leaders. A crucial next step is to ensure that all middle leaders are given the opportunity to observe teaching and learning in their areas of responsibility.

Governors are also continuing to develop their roles well. They have restructured how they are organised following advice from the local authority. This has ensured that the responsibility for monitoring has been effectively shared out. Minutes from meetings demonstrate that they continue to ask challenging questions of you and other leaders. They are also providing better challenge through the monitoring visits undertaken during the school day. For example their recent monitoring of pupil

progress meetings gave them the opportunity to ask relevant questions. They are positive about your open and honest approach, which has enabled them to become more effective in their roles.

The changes you have made to the school development plan are reasonably well focused on the areas for improvement identified in the previous inspection report. There remains, however, a lack of detail about how you intend to improve teaching, particularly in mathematics. And the milestones toward longer term targets do not link well enough to pupil outcomes for the impact of the plan to be measured regularly during the academic year. Nevertheless, the improvements you have made to leadership are beginning to make an impact on teaching and learning. During the short visits to classrooms that we made it was evident how your high expectations have raised the standard and quality of work presented in pupils' books. This was particularly the case in English. Pupils are already benefitting from the renewed energy and enthusiasm that teachers are bringing to lessons.

Teachers more consistently apply the changes you have made to the marking policy; notably in English, but less so in mathematics. We saw several examples of more able pupils being better challenged through tailored work to meet their needs. They are responding well to this and can talk about what they are doing and why with confidence.

Teaching still varies in quality. Better teaching was characterised by the use of good questioning that probed pupils' understanding and deepened their learning. This was the case in a strong mathematics lesson seen in Year 3, where the teacher used an enquiry approach to solving problems. He skilfully guided pupils through what they needed to do by using probing questioning, giving them the opportunity to apply their mathematical learning themselves. Overall, however, we saw that learning in mathematics is much less well developed than in English. Where teaching is weaker there is less purpose in what pupils are doing, and teachers do not always adapt their teaching to the needs of pupils well enough during lessons to help them make better progress.

The results achieved by pupils in the 2014 end of key stage 2 assessments reflects what we saw in classes. Despite improvements across the board, pupils did not make as much progress in mathematics as they did in reading and writing.

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

You have continued to make effective use of the support offered by the local authority. Governors have, in particular, benefited from continued scrutiny provided

by governor services. Reports written by the local authority following their visits demonstrate that they are providing the right support and challenge for the school. I was pleased to hear that future support will be considered collaboratively between you and the local authority.

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

Yours sincerely

Matthew Barnes
Seconded Inspector