

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

12 November 2014

Miss Rhian Cockwell
Headteacher
Oliver Tomkins Church of England Junior School
Beaumaris Road
Toothill
Swindon
SN5 8LW

Dear Miss Cockwell

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Oliver Tomkins Church of England Junior School

Following my visit to your school on 11 November, 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.

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 when observing teaching and reviewing pupils' work, senior leaders focus on evaluating the progress of different groups of pupils, especially those that have been identified as underachieving
- ensure school improvement plans set out the date and describe the methods that governors will use to check for themselves that planned actions are raising pupils' achievement
- ensure governors receive training to further develop their analysis and evaluation of the school's use of pupil premium
- increase opportunities for pupils to draft, edit and improve the quality of their writing.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with the headteacher, 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 plan was evaluated. During the visit, observations of lessons and a scrutiny of pupils' writing were completed with senior leaders. A range of documentation was reviewed, including evaluations of lesson observations and pupils' work, appraisal procedures, minutes from governing body meetings, notes of visits by the local authority and the findings of the external review of the school's use of the pupil premium. The views of parents, conveyed in 32 parental questionnaires, were taken into account.

Context

The roles and responsibilities of senior leaders have been reviewed across the Infant and Junior schools. From September, two senior leaders have taken responsibility for leading improvements in Key Stages 1 and 2. Each senior leader is also responsible for supporting teachers within these key stages.

Main findings

Senior leaders and governors have acted decisively in response to the findings of the most recent inspection with a concerted focus on improving pupils' achievement. The recent inspection was completed against a backdrop of rising levels of attainment from significantly below to around the national average. However, senior leaders recognise that the current levels of progress are not good enough, especially in mathematics and writing. They show a clear understanding that the acid test of their work will be measured by the gains made in pupils' progress.

Senior leaders, staff and governors have developed the school improvement plan into a comprehensive statement of the school's intentions. It clearly sets out the specific actions, the resources and the points along the journey where progress in addressing each of the key priorities will be reviewed. The school's plan is underpinned by individual subject action plans for literacy and mathematics that contain clear and specific descriptions of the accelerated progress that is expected of pupils. Importantly however, the plans do not set out the occasions or the methods that governors will use to check the effectiveness of the actions on raising pupils' achievement in the key areas.

By releasing the deputy headteacher from class teaching, senior leaders have increased the rigour and frequency of monitoring. A more systematic approach by senior leaders to following up on identified weaknesses is helping to raise staff expectations. However, monitoring does not pay sufficient attention to evaluating

and commenting on the progress of underperforming groups of pupils. As a result, feedback to teachers does not always help staff to consider how they can adapt teaching to ensure pupils of different abilities make faster progress

With the support of an external consultant, staff have increased opportunities for pupils to solve mathematical problems. For example, in one lesson we visited, pupils were provided with different calculation problems well matched to their abilities. This encouraged pupils to develop their fluency in calculation by finding the most efficient method. When developing their writing we noticed that pupils are encouraged to regularly produce longer pieces of writing. However, limited opportunities to draft, edit and improve their written work limits progress for some pupils.

Drawing on a range of information, senior leaders and governors have developed a staff appraisal system that measures the impact of staff with additional roles and responsibilities in terms of improving pupils' achievement. Governors meet regularly to discuss the progress of pupils. The review of pupil premium has raised governors' understanding of the importance of ensuring funding is carefully targeted at the needs of underachieving pupils. Governors acknowledge that they would benefit from further training to develop their analysis and evaluation of the progress of pupils eligible for additional government funding. Governors regularly evaluate aspects of the school improvement plan but the plan does not detail how and when they will check the work of the school for themselves.

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

In the period before the inspection, the support from a school improvement partner commissioned by the local authority had limited impact on the school's performance. Since the inspection, the local authority school improvement officer has more direct contact with the school and has helped to draft the school's improvement plan. The school has been encouraged to join a cluster of schools within the local authority that are at a similar stage of development. Together with a representative of the diocesan board, the local authority have set a date in November to complete an analysis of the school's latest attainment and achievement data. The school has not yet received reports from the diocesan representative on the actions arising from previous monitoring visits. All external advisors have had limited impact to date on raising pupils' achievement.

The school has commissioned an external consultant who has provided valuable coaching and support that is helping to raise the profile of mathematics across the school. With the subject leader, she has completed a thorough audit of mathematics and drawn up a detailed action plan.

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

Yours sincerely,

Mark Lindfield
Her Majesty's Inspector