

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](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

Direct T: 0121 679 9164  
Direct email: tim.ogbourn@serco.com



22 December 2014

Mrs S Wade  
Headteacher  
St Mary's CofE (A) First School  
The Heath  
Uttoxeter  
ST14 7LX

Dear Mrs Wade

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to St Mary's CofE (VA) First School**

Following my visit to your school on 6 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 first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in May 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 in May 2014. The school should take further action to:

- increase the amount of writing by pupils across the school.

### **Evidence**

During the inspection, meetings were held with the head teacher, 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. The inspector visited several lessons, speaking and listening informally to pupils and scrutinising their work.

### **Context**

A new head teacher took up post in September 2014.



## **Main findings**

The new head teacher (who was already an experienced head from a smaller school) has quickly understood the key strengths and weaknesses of the school, and taken rapid action to boost attainment in literacy. She has attended regional Ofsted training on English and mathematics, together with the subject leaders. Changes to how pupils record their written work are in hand, together with a new focus on writing at length. This includes the purchase of a large new supply of up-to-date reading books, to widen the experiences of pupils and improve their overall literacy knowledge. Visits and visitors have helped to widen the awareness of pupils and aid their creative writing. All pupils now receive group music tuition. Considerable investment has been made in training teaching assistants to operate a one-to-one intervention programme for pupils, linked to shortfalls in pupil achievement.

The review of governance has been postponed to January 2015, in order to allow the new head and restructured governing body a term to develop their work. The governing body has changed its structure to allow for clearer links between governors and aspects of the school. They are participating in learning walks and work scrutiny, to gain first-hand understanding of what pupils can do. The head teacher has introduced half-termly pupil progress assessment, reporting this to the governors so that they can see if pupils in each class are on track to attain the expected knowledge, skill and understanding by the end of each year. That data needs a 'benchmark' for each class at the start of September 2014. The school action plan addresses key issues and does include targets for monitoring progress. These should be even sharper, with direct pupil performance outcomes checked at regular intervals to act as milestones on the journey to good achievement over time.

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 linked the school with a local leader in education, and this has been helpful in accelerating change. That link is ensuring that teacher assessments of pupils work are reliable, across all years in the school. The local authority has coordinated a change in the way the governing body is organised. A recent review of progress by the local authority reported positive signs of improved outcomes for pupils. No additional external support is required.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Staffordshire and as below.

Yours sincerely

Brian Cartwright  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

