

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 5323
Direct email: suzy.smith@tribalgrou.com



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Mrs G O'Neill
Headteacher
Decoy Primary School
Deer Park Road
Newton Abbot
Devon
TQ12 1DH

Dear Mrs O'Neill

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Decoy Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 27 January 2015, 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 November 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:

- record on your post Ofsted action plan how and when governors will check the school's progress towards addressing each issue
- check regularly that all teachers consistently follow the school's marking and feedback policies
- ensure the school's monitoring activities focus clearly on the learning and progress of pupils.

Evidence

During the inspection, I met with you, the English subject leader, governors, and a representative from the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. I evaluated the school's post Ofsted action plan and scrutinised a range of documents, including the school's records of the outcomes of monitoring activities undertaken by leaders. I accompanied you on a focused tour of the school and discussed the actions taken to improve pupils' progress in writing. I looked at their writing in books from each year group. I also spoke with a group of pupils to seek their views on improvements made since the previous inspection.

Context

One member of the teaching staff is currently absent from school. The class is being taught by two temporary teachers. The Chair of the Governing Body recently resigned. Governors will shortly be appointing his successor.

Main findings

You have made a positive start in addressing the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection. You are determined to improve the school quickly. Your drive and urgency to get the school to good is understood and shared by the staff and governors. You have ensured parents are being kept informed of your actions and the impact these actions are having. The school community supports you and your commitment to improve the school and raise pupils' achievements.

Your key focus has been to improve the quality of writing. The English subject leader has organised and run meetings to develop teachers' skills. Teachers welcome the visits to local schools to observe good practice. They have also embraced opportunities to observe best practice which already exists in the school. All staff now have higher expectations of what their pupils can achieve. They are planning more challenging work which the pupils appreciate. Pupils say, 'teachers are pushing us now to work hard and write more. I am proud of my work'.

You have recently introduced revised marking and feedback policies. Although these linked policies have been shared with staff, teachers' marking in pupils' books is inconsistent. Scrutiny of children's written work shows the quality and quantity of writing has improved. Presentation is now of a high standard. Teachers are using comments and questions to guide pupils in their learning. Pupils also share work and check for themselves if their targets have been met. However, in lessons when this is less effective, teachers' written feedback does not always set out and challenge pupils to reach the next steps in their learning. You agree that leaders need to monitor this closely and ensure all actions taken are improving pupils' learning and progress.

The post Ofsted action plan includes all the areas for development identified at the last inspection. Targets are aspirational and you are aiming to get the school to good or better in a short period of time. You have included timescales and the actions to

be taken to achieve your planned outcomes. However, the role of governors, in checking actions taken to improve pupils' achievements, is not clear. Following the recent external review of governance and pupil premium, governors are developing a greater understanding of their role and its importance in improving the school quickly. This is helping them to be able to ask increasingly challenging questions of you and your leaders. They are using visits to the school to check for themselves how quickly the school is improving. They agree this rigour must continue to drive forward the rapid pace of change needed to become a good school.

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 knows the school well and is providing good support. This has included working with your school improvement partner to write an action plan, sharply focused on the improvements required. This is helping you to prioritise your work. The school is also drawing on a range of external support from the local authority and a National Leader in Education who leads a neighbouring school. This support is being particularly effective in raising teachers' expectations and developing their skills in planning challenging and engaging lessons.

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

Yours sincerely

Catherine Leahy

Her Majesty's Inspector