

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 9154
Direct email: aidan.dunne@serco.com



9 February 2015

Mrs Louise Reck
Headteacher
Down Hall Primary School
Brooklyn Drive
Rayleigh
Essex
SS6 9LW

Dear Mrs Reck

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Down Hall Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 6 February 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 second monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in November 2015. 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.

Evidence

During the inspection, I met with you, other senior leaders including the deputy headteacher, the Chair of the Governing Body and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since my previous visit. I evaluated school documentation including your analysis of assessment information, improvement planning, records of the monitoring of teaching and minutes of governor meetings. We visited all classes together, talked to pupils about their learning and looked at their work.

Context

Since my last visit, two teachers have left the school and two have been appointed. You have restructured the senior leadership team; phase leaders are all new to their roles. The governing body has been reconstituted with fewer members.

Main findings

The impact of your revitalised and more rigorous leadership is evident throughout the school. Classroom environments demonstrate expected standards, and displays support pupils' learning effectively. Teachers have responded positively to the explicit expectations you have set and to the specific, targeted support and coaching leaders are providing to help them improve. As a result, pupils are more organised and purposeful in their learning which, in turn, means their progress is improving. The school is in a much stronger position than it was at the time of my last visit.

You have sharpened action planning so that deadlines and processes, for checking the completion and impact of planned actions, are clear to staff and governors. A particular strength of the new arrangements is the short, time-limited plans you have put in place to address and eliminate any remaining key weaknesses. The new phase leader team is an emerging strength because leaders are supporting teachers to plan for pupils' learning and assess their progress very regularly. The deputy headteacher's leadership of mathematics continues to be a strength because teachers are given detailed feedback on how they can improve their teaching of the subject. Leadership of English has been strengthened by a new appointment. These key leaders now regularly undertake rigorous evaluation of pupils' achievement and the quality of teaching. Their termly reporting to you and the governors is highly evaluative, giving a strong analysis of improvement and remaining weaknesses so that follow up actions are well planned and resources allocated appropriately.

Your analysis of pupils' progress is more accurate, detailed and regular. As a result, pupils at risk of falling behind are more quickly identified and actions to support them to catch up are taken more rapidly. Work in pupils' books shows that progress is improving, and that presentation and handwriting are also better. There is however, a continuing need to sustain the focus on improving these key skills and to further raise standards in writing. Teachers are following your marking policy more consistently, although the quality and impact it has on pupils' learning is variable. Similarly, only in some classes is the use of pupils' learning targets challenging them effectively to make increased progress.

Governors have a much better understanding of how well the school is doing because the information you provide them with is clearer. As a result, minutes of their meetings, particularly of the post-Ofsted action group, show they are asking more challenging questions. Governors are working to ensure they use their skills to best advantage and that monitoring visits are much more tightly focused on your

key improvement priorities. A review of governance agreed with the local authority has endorsed the quality of their work.

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 provided strong support which you have found both challenging and useful because the adviser has responded effectively to meet the school's needs. A short-term improvement board has been in place which meets to review improvements on a half-termly basis. This has helped you and governors to develop greater confidence in analysing and presenting the work of the school. Coaching for subject and phase leaders in monitoring teaching and learning has been effective in developing their skills and increasing their ability to drive improvement.

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

Yours sincerely

Prue Rayner
Her Majesty's Inspector

The letter should be copied to the following:

- Appropriate authority - Chair of the Governing Body/Interim Executive Board
- Local authority – including where the school is an academy
- The Education Funding Agency (EFA) if the school has a sixth form