

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 9158
Direct email: rachel.dayan@serco.com



10 March 2015

Ms Patricia Bandle
Headteacher
Gade Valley Junior Mixed Infant and Nursery School
Gadebridge Road
Hemel Hempstead
HP1 3DT

Dear Ms Bandle

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Gade Valley Junior Mixed Infant and Nursery School

Following my visit to your school on 9 March 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:

- reduce the number of targets in the school action plan and ensure that for each target there is measurable success.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with you and the deputy headteacher, a group of year six pupils, members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The school action plan was evaluated. A tour of the school, accompanied by senior leaders, was undertaken and all the classrooms were visited. Pupils' work in writing and mathematics from Year 2 and Year 6 was scrutinised. A review of current school information, the outcomes of recent observations of the quality of teaching and reports by the school's improvement partners were reviewed.

Context

Since the recent inspection the school has appointed a Year 3 teacher and a higher level teaching assistant.

Main findings

Pupils in most classes are now making faster progress than was seen at the time of the inspection. You and your senior colleagues have introduced a new writing scheme across the school. A staff training focus on writing through paired observations has enabled teachers to reflect on their own lessons and to improve the way they teach writing. Teachers like the new scheme because it gives useful structure to support their teaching of writing. This has had a positive impact on the quality of work the pupils are producing and gives far greater opportunities for extended writing. Pupils in Year 6 speak of teachers' higher expectations and about there being more challenge and interest in these lessons. The impact of this is also evident from pupils' books which show an increasing confidence in their writing skills.

Rigorous monitoring of the quality of teaching, by yourself and your senior team, is now more focussed on pupil progress and the impact that teaching is having on developing phonics and writing skills. You are now using a combination of lesson observations, discussions with pupils, looking at pupils' work and progress information together, and these indicate that the quality of teaching is steadily improving.

The school has taken part in some whole-school training on the teaching of phonics. This has had an impact on the way that teachers now plan their lessons. All teachers have had the opportunity to observe some effective phonics teaching through a coaching programme and understand the importance of raising the profile of phonics across the school.

The quality of marking within the school is steadily improving. Teachers are now providing more consistent advice and feedback. Reflection time is now built into each day so the pupils can read through the helpful comments they have been given about their work and make any necessary improvements; however teachers do not check that pupils always provide high quality responses. Pupils feel that their teachers are giving them more helpful advice on how to improve their work. One girl commented that she was unclear about how to make progress before but now the teacher makes it very clear how she can improve her work and achieve a higher level.

You have successfully identified the priorities which are necessary to drive up the quality of teaching and learning but the school action plan has too many areas of focus. As a result governors understand, in broad terms, what needs to be done to improve the school, but are still too reliant on the information they are given by

school leaders about the progress the school is making. A more condensed school action plan will help governors to ask relevant and searching questions about pupil progress and the quality of teaching, and therefore hold leaders to account more effectively.

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

Local authority officers have helped to support you by providing training opportunities for teachers, attending regular progress meetings and drafting reports. These reports have been useful in assessing the quality of teaching and in identifying areas for further development. The local authority has provided effective training on phonics which has been very helpful. You have also been able to draw upon expertise in the Early Years Foundation Stage to strengthen the teaching in this area. As a result of this support a number of improvements have been made to the learning environment and the more effective use of learning journals.

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

Yours sincerely

Pete Sewell

Associate Inspector

cc. Chair of the Governing Body

cc. Local authority