

Serco Inspections
Colmore Plaza
20 Colmore Circus Queensway
Birmingham
B4 6AT

T 0300 123 1231
Text Phone: 0161 618 8524
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk

Direct T: 0121 679 9154
Direct email: aidan.dunne@serco.com



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Jane Cartlidge
Headteacher
Southfield Primary School
Banbury Road
Brackley
NN13 6AU

Special measures monitoring inspection of Southfield Primary School

Following my visit to your academy on 17 March 2015, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave during the inspection and for the time you made available to discuss the actions which have been taken since the academy's recent section 5 inspection.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the academy became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in November 2014.

Evidence

During this inspection, I held meetings with you and the other members of the academy's senior leadership team. I spoke with the Chair of the Governing Body and the academy's improvement partner. I evaluated the academy's statement of action and improvement plans. I examined an additional range of documents including records of performance management meetings and the minutes of governing body meetings held since the last inspection. I scrutinised attainment and progress data. I visited most classrooms, spoke informally to pupils and looked at examples of their work.

Context

You have restructured the academy's leadership team since the last inspection so that there are clearer lines of responsibility and greater accountability for the key areas of the academy's improvement plan. You have acted swiftly to improve the academy's financial situation and there are consultations taking place regarding a number of redundancies across the academy. You have secured increased support from an education improvement adviser who has a strong history of supporting school improvement. The governing body has also been restructured so that each

governor now has clearly defined responsibilities directly linked to the academy's improvement plan. The external review of governance is due to take place later this week. The external review of the use of the pupil premium is due to take place in April 2015.

The quality of leadership and management at the school

The academy's leadership team and governing body agree that the inspectors' judgements at the most recent inspection were justified. When you joined the academy as headteacher in April 2014, you swiftly and accurately identified weaknesses across all areas of the academy's performance and took action to address them. Since the last inspection this work has continued at an urgent pace. There are clear indications that the actions you are taking to address the key areas for improvement highlighted by inspectors are having a positive impact.

You are now better supported by the senior leaders and governing body because they have a clearer understanding of their responsibilities and accountability. You are acting to strengthen leadership at all levels across the academy. For example, three teachers are joining the outstanding teacher programme, which will further develop their skills in readiness to take up leadership roles at the academy. The academy's improvement adviser is providing support and practical advice for your senior leadership team. Your determination that all staff are 'leaders of learning' has been made clear and you have defined what this means for all roles. There is evidence that this has had a positive impact on raising expectations of leaders, teachers and support staff. For example, staff identify and record in 'academy improvement logs' how their actions are contributing to raising standards, and this is supporting the development of a reflective and proactive team.

Governors have an increasingly accurate view of the academy's performance and now hold the senior leaders to greater account. For example, they have questioned how the academy will have the capacity to implement certain actions and challenged leaders to provide clearer criteria for measuring the success of the support provided for pupils. The governing body has rightly taken decisive action to link each governor with a key area in the academy's improvement plan and strengthen processes for reporting on progress in these areas.

Leaders have revised the performance management arrangements for staff so that targets set for teachers are closely linked to the academy's priorities for improvement and take greater account of the progress that pupils make. Some of these targets need to more sharply reflect the expectations and accountability of the teachers who have whole-school improvement responsibilities. Leaders are increasingly monitoring the impact of training and support for staff through lesson

observations and checking pupils' work. For example, they have looked at the impact of recent training for staff on how to ask more probing questions to support and extend pupils' learning.

The academy's senior leaders have introduced new assessment processes in Key Stages 1 and 2 that provide accurate information on pupils' progress for teachers and leaders. Leaders monitor and analyse pupils' progress data more effectively so that underperformance is identified and addressed. Leaders regularly meet with teachers to discuss pupils' progress so that teachers are held to account for the progress of the pupils that they teach.

Leaders now monitor the progress of some groups of pupils, for example disadvantaged pupils and those who have a disability or special educational needs. However, the data need to be analysed in greater detail to provide leaders with all the information they need to take required action. Leaders must clearly identify and closely monitor the progress made by all groups of pupils, including the more able, to ensure that leaders and teachers have the highest expectations for all pupils. The academy does not currently have an electronic system for the management of data. This is holding back the frequency and depth of analysis of pupils' progress by teachers and leaders. Leaders are taking urgent action to implement a suitable system as soon as possible.

Pupils are now set challenging targets in reading, writing and mathematics. This has raised teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve. Leaders have made changes to the school timetable to maximise learning time. A new marking scheme has been introduced. Leaders and governors frequently monitor teachers' planning diaries to ensure that tasks and activities being set are matched accurately to pupils' ability levels. The quality and content of pupils' work are then monitored to ensure that they correspond to the work planned and that the marking scheme is being consistently implemented. Senior leaders now have a greater presence in classrooms and records of their visits demonstrate the positive impact that this is beginning to have on the quality of teaching. Leaders should now firmly establish the frequency of monitoring activities and the lines of responsibility for ensuring that they take place.

Leaders have acted swiftly to improve the academy's computing equipment in order to benefit pupils' learning. Wireless internet is now available throughout the academy, laptops are installed in classrooms and tablet computers are being introduced. Training has taken place to develop the computing skills of staff and the academy now has the support of a specialist technician. It is too early to judge the impact of these actions.

You have amended the academy improvement plan following the last inspection and developed additional plans to broadly address the areas for improvement identified by inspectors. The academy action plan also broadly addresses these main issues.

The following amendments would add detail to both the academy's development plan and the statement of action and make them more compatible:

- highlight the actions being taken that directly relate to the areas for improvements identified at the last inspection
- identify who is responsible for leading these actions and when, the specific training and resources required, and how governors will check that actions are accomplished and evaluate the impact.

You have agreed to forward the amended plan and statement of action to me by 27 March 2015.

Following the monitoring inspection the following judgements were made:

The academy's improvement plan and statement of action are fit for purpose.

Having considered all the evidence I strongly recommend that the academy does not seek to appoint newly qualified teachers.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Northamptonshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Karen Gannon

Her Majesty's Inspector

- Appropriate authority - Chair of the Governing Body/Interim Executive Board
- Local authority – (including where a school is an academy)
- The Secretary of State
- The lead inspector