

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 9169

Direct email: mathew.mitchell@serco.com

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Sue Faulkner

Executive Headteacher

St Osyth Church of England Primary School

Norman Close

St Osyth

CO16 8PN

Dear Mrs Faulkner

Special measures monitoring inspection of St Osyth Church of England Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 16 June 2015 accompanied by Richard Spencer, Associate Inspector, 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 school's recent section 5 inspection.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in March 2015.

Evidence

During this inspection, we held meetings with you and the head of school; the deputy headteacher; middle leaders, the Chair and three others members of the Interim Executive Board, including a representative from the Diocese of Chelmsford; two representatives of the local authority; and groups of pupils from Years 5 and 6. We also visited every class to observe pupils at work and we looked at their books. We reviewed a range of documentation. The local authority's statement of action and the school's action plan were evaluated.

Context

Since the previous inspection, a substantive headteacher has been appointed with effect from September 2015. The governing body has been replaced by an interim executive board.

The quality of leadership and management at the school

The post-Ofsted school action plan, which covers the remainder of this academic year, suitably outlines all of the areas for improvement from the previous inspection, and this document is clearly linked to the local authority's statement of action. The local authority's Standards and Excellence Commissioner carefully cross-references her fortnightly monitoring visits against the actions identified. However, the school action plan does not always make clear or quantify how the impact of these actions will be measured and what the school is expected to have achieved by a given deadline. Hence, it is not clear whether the progress that is being made is enough to secure the removal of special measures within the required timescale. This will be important to enable the interim executive board to evaluate the school's progress accurately.

School leaders have acted quickly to tackle poor standards. Current forecasts indicate that improvements are beginning to be seen, particularly in the early years, achievement in phonics, in Key Stage 1 and overall attainment in Year 6. However, the executive headteacher is realistic about the uneven progress still being made across all year groups. School leaders acknowledge the need to close the gaps in attainment between disadvantaged pupils and other pupils, both in school and nationally.

Significant and effective support has been provided to the school by both the local authority and partner schools to improve teaching. This has had some initial impact but has not been uniformly successful. Too much teaching is either inadequate or requires improvement. Middle leaders understand the challenges set out for them in the school action plan and are enthusiastic about the changes to the curriculum and the support they have received in recent months. Inspectors saw evidence of new initiatives in the classroom such as 'choose a challenge', which allows pupils to select tasks that challenge them based on their abilities. Inspectors' scrutiny of pupils' books and discussions with pupils indicate that teachers are identifying and correcting pupils' spelling errors more frequently. Teaching assistants are being deployed more effectively in areas such as phonics teaching. They are required to contribute to pupil progress reports and they now attend relevant staff meetings. This has enhanced their role and improved their awareness of the specific learning needs of the pupils they support.

Work has begun to improve pupils' understanding of the different faiths found in modern Britain, with some pupils now able to describe different traditions and practices. Classroom displays are also being actively used to identify and highlight how pupils' learning reflects aspects of life in modern Britain.

The external review of governance recommended in the previous inspection report did not take place because the governing body was dissolved and replaced with an interim executive board. At the time of our visit, the interim executive board had yet to meet for the first time. However, inspectors met with four members who were able to clearly identify the priorities set out in the statement of action and the school action plan. Members of the interim executive board have valuable and extensive experience of school improvement and are well placed to evaluate and challenge the school effectively.

The local authority commissioned a review of the school's use of pupil premium funding to support disadvantaged pupils. The recommendations made are reflected in the school's action plan. The local authority's Standards and Excellence Commissioner provides rigorous support and challenge through her regular visits to the school. She actively monitors the work of school leaders and is carefully auditing their impact against the statement of action.

During the inspection, one aspect of the single central record of recruitment checks on staff was found not to be fully compliant. This was rectified swiftly before the end of the inspection.

Following the monitoring inspection, the following judgements were made:

The local authority's statement of action is fit for purpose.

The school's action plan is not fit for purpose.

The school may not appoint newly qualified teachers before the next monitoring inspection.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Interim Executive Board, the Director of Children's Services for Essex, and the Diocese of Chelmsford. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

John Daniell
Her Majesty's Inspector