

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 9163
Direct email: lewis.mackie1@serco.com



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Richard Moore
Headteacher
Fen Ditton Primary School
Horningsea Road
Fen Ditton
Cambridge
CB5 8SZ

Dear Mr Moore

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Fen Ditton Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 16 June 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 February 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. The school should take further action to:

- strengthen the work of the middle leaders in raising the quality of teaching and learning, with a cohesive and systematic approach to monitoring
- include precise success criteria and timescales in the action plan, to show the journey through to 'good' or better.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with you, other senior leaders, the governing body and a representative of the local authority to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. The school action plans were evaluated. During a tour of your school, we observed teaching in every class. I scrutinised work in pupils' books and a range of documentation that you provided.

Context

There have been no significant changes to staffing since the last inspection. One member of your senior leadership is due to retire at the end of term and you already have plans in place to maintain and build the school's leadership capacity.

Main findings

Since the last inspection you have wasted no time in updating the school development plan to correctly focus on addressing the issues highlighted in the inspection. You and your governors consider there are no barriers preventing the school from improving quickly and being judged good at its next inspection. Staff have responded positively and are committed to securing long-term improvements. As you continue to evaluate and update the plans each term, your plans need to extend to plot the actions needed to take the school to 'good' or better.

Your development plans include a range of appropriate actions as well as monitoring activities, dates for completion and success criteria. You are reviewing the plan regularly, and it is clearly a useful working document. While the plans include dates and success criteria, these need to be tightened to ensure they are as 'smart' as possible to ensure that targets for improvement are suitably ambitious and that governors can effectively check and hold leaders to account.

Governors have also written an action plan, so they can concentrate on the core priorities of school improvement. As a result, they are more organised and becoming more effective. In addition, the governing body's committee meetings are held at times that now link with the school assessment cycle, so they have timely and the most relevant information.

Governors are making sure that they receive the training that they require and have already organised training with the local authority. Each governor now has a specific role and is linked to a member of staff who has responsibility for that area.

You have rightly prioritised establishing and developing a more effective leadership team. You are supporting the professional development of school leaders, and as a result they are responding positively and already having an impact in leading and raising the standard of teaching and learning of their subjects. For example, they have a wealth of information from monitoring the achievement of pupils through book scrutinies, meetings and training of staff. They are monitoring planning and curriculum overviews for subjects, benefitting from weekly time to fulfil their leadership roles. In the same way, the leader of early years is well organised, increasingly analytical and is driving improvement. The focus now needs to move to a more planned approach to monitoring, so that the impact can be more systematically evaluated.

From the learning that we saw, in the teaching of mathematics, there is greater evidence of planned work that stretches and challenges the most-able, as well as clear opportunities for other groups to make progress. The use of additional adults in lessons is effective as they help the most-able pupils develop their skills further. This is because you have introduced quality training for your teaching assistants on a weekly basis, to enhance their own mathematical skills. The school's own records show that the quality of teaching is more consistently good.

You are continuing to develop the small group teaching for English and mathematics in the mornings, using the funds from pupil premium. The pupils seen were developing their confidence and willingly applying their writing and mathematical skills. This provision is already helping pupils make accelerated progress in core subjects. Your half termly review to assess the impact of this additional teaching is effective and allows for changes where required. This is a strength in your leadership of teaching and learning.

Assessment data is being used well and analysed fully to ensure that pupils receive appropriate support and challenge. Your current monitoring information shows that in each key stage the proportion of pupils making or exceeding the expected levels is much improved since last year. You are tracking the progress of pupils frequently and well, so achievement is improving as a result. In the early years, information on children's gains in learning are clearer. As a result, you are more able to demonstrate progress made by children and ensure appropriate support where needed. Governors have received training on understanding and interpreting assessment information so they are now better able to ask challenging questions.

Ofsted may carry out further monitoring inspections and, where necessary, provide further support and challenge to the school until its next section 5 inspection.

External support

The local authority is providing good support, and reviews the school's performance regularly. The school improvement partner confirms that the school takes full advantage of the opportunities that are offered. The local authority has commissioned targeted support from a number of advisors (including literacy, mathematics and early years) and you told me that this is very beneficial in improving subject leadership and improving staff confidence.

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

Yours sincerely

Kim Hall
Her Majesty's Inspector

The letter should be copied to the following:

- Chair of the governing body
- Local authority