

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



6 July 2015

Helen Coop
Headteacher
Birchanger Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School
Birchwood
Birchanger
Bishop's Stortford
CM23 5QL

Dear Mrs Coop

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Birchanger Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 3 July, 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. At its previous section 5 inspection the school was also judged to require improvement.

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:

- monitor all external support and training to ensure that staff receive precise and consistent guidance to improve teaching and learning.

Evidence

During the inspection, I met with you and three governors, including the Chair of the Governing Body. I also met the local authority's standards and excellence commissioner. I evaluated the school improvement plan and read a range of documentation. We carried out brief visits to lessons and spoke to pupils about their work.

Context

A new inclusion and special educational needs coordinator joined the school in June 2015. The Year 5/6 class teacher left in May 2015 to start maternity leave. A long-term supply teacher is currently teaching the class and will teach the Year 4 class from September 2015. The Year 2 class will also have a new teacher from September 2015 and new subject leaders will take responsibility for English and Mathematics.

Main findings

Significant progress is being made on the key issues identified at the inspection. The quality of teaching and learning is improving, you are raising staff expectation of what individual pupils can achieve. Teachers are planning more carefully to provide challenging tasks for all pupils, including those identified as disadvantaged. The pupil premium review that took place in April 2015 gave the school clear points for action and you are developing a more personalised approach with clear targets for each individual pupil to achieve. Overall, standards are rising, particularly at Key Stage 1, and pupils' progress is accelerating.

The strengths identified in the early years and in pupils' behaviour and safety are being maintained. The strong aspects of your leadership, such as the quality of your strategic planning and your focus on improving teachers' skills, are having the desired effect. Your determination to make the school more effective as quickly as possible is sensitively balanced against the need to support and coach new staff. Governors are knowledgeable, highly committed and are providing you with the help you need, particularly in managing effectively the significant staff changes, and keeping parents well informed.

You are prioritising well to deliver the key actions of your school improvement plan. For example, you are making sure that teachers develop a good knowledge of the subjects they teach and that they understand the requirements of the curriculum and assessment. The new leadership for mathematics is developing well and your plans for the leadership of English and phonics are sound. You are aware of the need to monitor subject leadership closely because most subject leaders lack experience.

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

In order to increase leadership capacity, a senior teacher, seconded from another school from June 2015, is working with you for one day a week until the end of the Autumn Term 2015. It is still too soon to see the difference this additional support is making. You find the half-termly visit of the school improvement partner very helpful. The local authority checks progress frequently through the improvement board. An

external agency provides training for staff and links with effective schools are helping teachers share good practice and moderate their assessment of pupils' work. You now need to check the impact of all external support to ensure that staff know exactly what they must do and to check that the good practice learnt from training and visits to other schools is applied promptly and across all classes to improve teaching and learning.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Chelmsford Diocese education adviser and the Director of Children's Services for Essex local authority.

Yours sincerely

Marianick Ellender-Gelé
Her Majesty's Inspector