

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

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

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Mrs Cheryl Woolf
Executive Headteacher
Porters Grange Primary School and Nursery
Lancaster Gardens
Southend-on-Sea
Essex
SS1 2NS

Dear Mrs Woolf

Serious weaknesses first monitoring inspection of Porters Grange Primary School and Nursery

Following my visit to your school on Wednesday 20 January 2016, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the outcome and 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 most recent section 5 inspection.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to have serious weaknesses in April 2015. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

During this inspection, I met with you, the head of learning and the two heads of school. I also met the new assistant headteacher. I met the Chair of the Governing Body, three other governors and a representative of the local authority. I spoke with a newly qualified teacher and two other members of the teaching staff. I scrutinised a range of documentation, including records of monitoring undertaken by the school and reports provided by the local authority. I evaluated the school's action plan.

Context

Significant staff changes occurred following the April 2015 inspection, particularly at the beginning of the current academic year. Three new governors joined the governing body. A new special educational needs coordinator took up post in June 2015 and a new assistant headteacher joined the school in September 2015. These appointments led to the reorganisation of the responsibilities across the senior leadership team. Several teachers left in July 2015. They were replaced and you changed the allocation of some staff to classes and year groups. You also appointed specialist teachers for computing, music and physical education. The school is due to convert to academy status on 1 April 2016.

The quality of leadership and management at the school

All discussions with leaders, governors and parents give the clear impression of a school that has made great strides since its section 5 inspection. You are skilfully steering everyone's energy towards improving the school quickly and your ambition is to lead the school to good as soon as possible. The realisation of this ambition is already demonstrated in a range of areas such as:

- the positive view parents have of the school
- the improved behaviour of pupils who say that the school is 'so much better'
- the quality of work in pupils' books, particularly pupils' handwriting
- the dedication and high morale of staff
- the improved learning environment.

The school's action plan shows how rapid improvement will be achieved. Actions are precise and indicate clearly how weaknesses will be eradicated. Most of these actions are rightly focused on improving the quality of teaching and learning. The head of learning monitors teaching frequently and teachers are given very specific guidance on what they need to improve. This is beginning to accelerate pupils' achievement. Examples of improved practice in teaching and learning include:

- a more consistent approach to marking and correcting pupils' misconceptions
- a relentless focus on improving pupils' presentation of work
- the daily reinforcement of accurate punctuation and spelling
- the good identification of gaps in learning so that support is better matched to pupils' needs.

You are aware that some aspects of teaching are still not good enough. There is some further work to do to ensure that pupils of all abilities make rapid progress; this is particularly the case for boys who enter the Nursery or Reception classes with very low levels of development. It is too early to see whether the new system to record the progress of pupils (Pupil Tracker) is making a difference, but the senior leader in charge has the necessary skills and enthusiasm to move this on swiftly and

expertly. The new special educational needs coordinator has made a great job of sorting out all the legal and statutory requirements so that pupils in receipt of additional funding get the specific interventions and support to which they are entitled. She knows the families well and provides good leadership to a large team of support staff. You are aware of the need to consolidate communication between class teachers and the learning support assistants to accelerate pupils' progress.

The newly appointed assistant headteacher is working well, with the support of staff and the local authority education welfare officer, to improve attendance. He is also leading the behaviour team effectively and behaviour is improving. The families who find it difficult to get their children to school are known and supported when necessary. Children missing education are tracked to ensure their safety and well-being. Many strategies are now in place to encourage good attendance. This is paying dividends, with attendance much improved and now at 95.2%. Far more pupils to date have achieved 100% attendance.

The parents I met are very pleased with the work of the school. You are keeping them informed of developments. Parents say that staff are visible at the two school gates in the morning and they are particularly pleased with the improved behaviour, the new special activities, such as the Christmas decoration events, and the new website. They feel that the school takes their concerns and ideas seriously. You have great plans, such as creating a community library, to increase the participation of parents in the life of the school.

Governors are very supportive of the school. The experienced Chair of the Governing Body is clear about what needs to be done and the action plan shows how governors will monitor progress on their key priorities. The expertise of the governing body has been enhanced by the appointment of governors who have a strong knowledge of education. Governors have ensured that the external review of the use of pupil premium funding, recommended at the April inspection, was undertaken without delay. The special educational needs coordinator is acting on its findings.

You are using the expertise of local schools very effectively. You are very careful not to confuse staff with too many initiatives. With the support of your head of learning and heads of school, you ensure that teachers receive consistent messages on how to improve the quality of their teaching, learning and assessment. You are rightly planning more training for middle leaders and reviewing the amount of time they have to monitor the quality of provision in their areas of responsibilities because subject leadership, other than in English and mathematics, requires further improvement.

The local authority adviser and the support partner are monitoring key aspects of the school's work frequently. Their expertise is valuable and valued by the school because they check whether progress is accurate and quick enough. The local authority statement of action, evaluated by one of Her Majesty's Inspector in October 2015, includes all aspects that it should to meet requirements and indicates

how progress against the school's action plan will be evaluated. The school improvement and partnership board (SIPB), chaired by the local authority, has only met twice and it is not clear whether it is actually contributing to the improvement of the school. For example, in September 2015, inviting the local authority attendance officer to the next board meeting was identified as an action point. This did not actually happen when the board met in December 2015. The school received efficient support from the local authority human resource department when dealing with staffing issues.

Following the monitoring inspection the following judgements were made:

Leaders and managers are taking effective action towards the removal of the serious weaknesses designation.

The school's action plan is fit for purpose.

The local authority's statement of action was evaluated by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors in October 2015 and judged to be fit for purpose.

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

Yours sincerely

Marianick Ellender-Gelé
Her Majesty's Inspector