

Ofsted,
Piccadilly Gate,
Store
Street,
Manchester,
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 1231
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.gov.uk/ofsted

Direct T 03000131181
Direct E
Sara.Whalley@ofsted.gov.uk



14 September 2015

Mrs M Coath
Headteacher
Priorswood Primary School
Wedlands
Taunton
TA2 7AD

Dear Mrs Coath

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Priorswood Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 14 September 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 March 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, governors and the academy trust are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection in order to become a good school. The school should take further action to:

- ensure that senior leaders have enough time to carry out their allocated duties to swiftly drive school improvement, particularly in mathematics
- check that the increased time that has been dedicated to the teaching of mathematics is being used effectively by class teachers and is helping to improve the progress of all pupils
- extend the academy's links with other local schools, and share best practice with those who are good or better, particularly in mathematics.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with you, teachers, pupils, and representatives of the local and the Collaborative Academies Trust governing bodies to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. In addition, I met with the pupil council to hear their views. We jointly observed mathematics being taught in Years 1 to 6, the behaviour of pupils at break and lunchtime, and an assembly. A selection of pupils' mathematics and English books in Years 2 and 6 was reviewed. I evaluated the academy's action plans and scrutinised a range of documents, including policies and safeguarding procedures.

Context

At the time of the last inspection in March 2015, you were acting as the headteacher for part of the week in the academy. From September 2015, you have been the interim full-time headteacher. The governing body has plans to nationally advertise a permanent headteacher position in the next few weeks. Two replacement class teachers joined the school in September 2015.

Main findings

Since the last inspection the senior leadership team has developed a better understanding of their roles and responsibilities. They are keen and enthusiastic to develop and improve the impact they are having within their areas of responsibility and across the school. The governing body needs to ensure that school leaders have enough time to check the progress that pupils are making in lessons and to be able to model best practice to those who are less experienced.

The changes to the behaviour system that the academy uses are helping to ensure that low level disruption in lessons is reducing. At playtime and lunchtime we saw pupils playing happily together. Appropriate sanctions are deployed by staff and greater supervision of pupils during non-lesson times is helping to maintain better behaviour. In addition, good or better behaviour is also being appropriately rewarded. The pupil council said that these changes meant that they could concentrate better on their learning because lessons were generally more quiet and calm.

Staff training on the new ways of teaching mathematics has helped secure teachers' and teaching assistants' confidence and improved subject knowledge. This training was done with other academies in the multi-academy trust, enabling staff to share experiences across the different academies. It has helped to develop strong partnerships with staff working well together to develop mathematics and create the best conditions for children to learn more effectively. Senior leaders and governors are aware that stronger links across the multi-academy trust have enabled 'economies of scale', keeping training costs lower than if each academy did the

training separately. More joint training and closer collaboration across the trust, for example the newly devised system for measuring pupil's progress in the individual academies and across the trust is planned.

More time has been allocated to the direct teaching of mathematics and the academy is beginning to exploit more opportunities to teach the practical applications of mathematics through other subjects. During our visit to lessons it was not always evident that this additional time was being optimised in all year groups. We also noticed that staff were not always providing pupils with the most appropriate resources to help accelerate their learning and understanding.

The academy development plans have an appropriate focus on the areas identified at the Ofsted inspection in March 2015 when the academy was judged as requiring improvement. School leaders and governors are aware that the academy development plans, along with the individual subject plans, need to be sharper. In order to reduce the timescale for the school to provide a good or better education the planned actions need to be completed sooner and have more explicit references to the accelerated progress of pupils. The academy's safeguarding policy is currently being reviewed and the website is being rebuilt.

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

Since the inspection in March 2015, the academy is increasingly making better use of external support and expertise to improve governance. For example, the external review of governance in July 2015, clearly identified the strengths of the governing body and where improvements needed to be made. The governing body has used the review to generate an action plan that is clear and has a direct focus on the areas in most need of improvement. From the plan they commissioned an external review of pupils' workbooks, completed in September 2015. This has helped them have a better understanding about the progress pupils made last year and that the quality of presentation and information provided by teachers to help pupils improve their work was inconsistent. Evidence from my scrutiny of pupils' books concurs with the external reviewers findings. Further actions to be undertaken include an external review of the use of the pupil premium funding with the aim to identify where gaps in pupils' achievement can be narrowed quicker and better.

The academy needs to provide more opportunities for staff to see, and work more closely with, schools that are good or better.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Somerset and as below.

Yours sincerely

Steffi Penny
Her Majesty's Inspector