

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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Chris Kronda
Headteacher
South Bersted CofE Primary School
Church Lane
Bognor Regis
West Sussex
PO22 9PZ

Dear Mr Kronda

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to South Bersted CofE Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 26 April 2016, 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 June 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:

- ensure that governors are provided with a comprehensive, concise and accurate evaluation of the school's performance
- ensure that the school's main improvement plan includes direct references to all the areas identified for improvement in the most recent section 5 inspection and shows clearly how governors will check the impact of leaders' actions on pupils' outcomes
- further develop leaders' evaluations of teaching, to include consideration of how well this promotes pupils' progress during lessons and over time.

Evidence

During the inspection, I met with you and the deputy headteacher to discuss your evaluation of the school's progress. We visited lessons together in key stages 1 and 2 to observe pupils and teachers at work. I looked at pupils' mathematics and writing work books. I held meetings with middle leaders, recently qualified teachers, the chair of the governing body and another governor, and a representative of the local authority. I held a telephone conversation with a representative of the diocese. I considered the views of parents in the 76 responses to Ofsted's online survey, Parent View. I talked with pupils in the classrooms and in the playground and spoke with members of staff around the school. A range of documents was considered, including your evaluation of the school's effectiveness, the school's main improvement plan, records of leaders' checks on teaching, minutes of governing body meetings and local authority reports.

Context

A new deputy headteacher joined the school in September, with two full-time teachers, one of whom is newly qualified. A new teaching assistant joined the early years team in January.

Main findings

You are leading with clarity and determination, ably supported by the deputy headteacher and an increasingly skilled team of middle leaders. After joining the school just before the last section 5 inspection, you swiftly put into place the systems needed to hold staff to account. As a result, you have established a culture of high expectations and effective teamwork, with a clear focus on meeting the personal and academic needs of each pupil.

All the teachers I spoke with told me how important the work of the deputy headteacher has been in leading the rapid development of arrangements to assess and record pupils' achievement. Staff have worked hard to implement, check and refine these systems to make them increasingly reliable. Teachers use this information well to inform their planning for lessons so that pupils make progress from their different starting points. This is helping to close gaps in pupils' learning and move pupils on towards success in meeting the raised expectations of the new national curriculum. Referring closely to assessment information, you meet regularly with teachers to review the progress of their class, checking closely on the achievement of individuals and agreeing next steps. This is helping to accelerate pupils' progress.

The inclusion leader uses assessment information well to identify pupils who need additional support, to provide suitable interventions and to check on their success. As a result, the progress of pupils with special educational needs or disability is improving. Other middle leaders are also beginning to use assessment information effectively to identify strengths and areas for improvement in pupils' achievement in different subjects. Your overall evaluation of the school's effectiveness makes increasing use of assessment information, but does not yet cover all the areas of

the school's performance or provide governors with a concise description of pupils' outcomes.

Teachers' current assessments indicate that pupils' progress is accelerating throughout key stages 1 and 2. In Year 1, teachers' assessments show that a greater proportion of pupils than previously are on course to achieve the expected score in the national phonics (letters and the sounds they represent) check. In Reception Year, teachers assess that a higher proportion of children are on track to achieve a good level of development than in 2015.

You are not complacent however. You have identified where pupils' attainment remains below that expected for their ages, and you are aware of the need to ensure that the most-able pupils are challenged to achieve highly. You are also alert to continuing gaps between the achievement of pupils supported by the pupil premium and that of others (the pupil premium is additional government funding to support pupils entitled to free school meals and those looked after by the local authority). You ensured that staff acted promptly on recommendations made in the review you commissioned of the school's provision for pupils supported by the pupil premium. Leaders are now tracking the progress of these pupils closely. However, it is too early to gauge the impact of these developments.

You ensure that staff have the training and development they need to meet your high expectations for their performance. By working closely with the local authority and the local schools partnership, you ensure a range of relevant mentoring and advice is provided. Recently qualified staff value the support and guidance they receive from more experienced colleagues, including the deputy headteacher and leader for English, and told me precisely how this helps them develop their teaching to promote pupils' progress. You have recently introduced training and performance management arrangements for teaching assistants, sensibly linking this to the development of the inclusion leader's responsibilities.

As a result, teaching is improving consistently. Pupils are responding well to adults' higher expectations by taking greater care and pride in their work while completing more writing and mathematics in their work books. Teachers and teaching assistants now use questions more systematically to check and challenge pupils' thinking, including when providing feedback to pupils on their work. In their new 'show off' mathematics work books, pupils are beginning to demonstrate independently how well they can tackle challenging mathematical problems. The teaching of reading to groups has been reorganised so that all pupils are now given meaningful activities during these lessons. Furthermore, teachers are making valuable connections between reading and writing lessons to help pupils develop their English skills in a coherent way. In Reception Year, richer activities have been introduced inside and outside, and expectations raised significantly for children's achievement in phonics.

You check teaching regularly and provide helpful feedback to teachers about how they can implement the school's policies more effectively. However, these checks do not yet consider consistently the impact of teaching on pupils' progress during lessons and over time.

Governors know the school well, particularly through their regular visits, which are often to review a specific aspect of the school's improvement plan. Governors ask relevant questions about the reports you provide in meetings and look to the local authority to validate these. Nevertheless, how and when governors will check the impact of leaders' actions on pupils' progress are not set out in the school's main improvement plan, so this is not well coordinated. In addition, because you do not yet provide governors with a comprehensive evaluation of the school's performance, including a clear and concise assessment of pupils' outcomes, governors' understanding of the overall effectiveness of the school is limited.

External support

The local authority is providing wide-ranging, bespoke support for teachers and middle leaders. This is supporting improvements in teaching well, particularly in Reception Year, in mathematics and English, and in the provision for pupils who need additional support, academically or personally. However, advisers have not been sufficiently challenging to you about the quality of the school's main evaluation document and improvement plan.

You took the initiative to ensure that local authority support is well matched to the school's needs and also to seize valuable opportunities to improve teaching through partnership with other local schools.

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

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the director of children's services for West Sussex and the diocese of Chichester.

Yours sincerely

Siân Thornton
Her Majesty's Inspector