

Ofsted  
Piccadilly Gate  
Store Street  
Manchester  
M1 2WD

T 0300 123 4234  
[www.gov.uk/ofsted](http://www.gov.uk/ofsted)



9 November 2018

Miss Alice Brown  
Headteacher  
St Mary's CofE Primary School  
Lansdown View  
Timsbury  
Bath  
Somerset  
BA2 0JR

Dear Miss Brown

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to St Mary's CofE Primary School**

Following my visit to your school on 18 October 2018, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the monitoring 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 monitoring inspection was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 and has taken place because the school has received three successive judgements of requires improvement at its previous section 5 inspections.

Senior leaders and governors are not taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the last section 5 inspection in order for the school to become good.

The school should take further action to:

- improve leadership and management by:
  - continuing to develop assessment so that leaders can identify accurately when they need to intervene to improve teaching
  - developing middle leaders' monitoring skills so that leaders can assure themselves that pupils are making strong progress in all subjects
  - continuing to improve attendance for pupils with higher absence rates

- improve the consistency of teaching, learning and assessment by:
  - securing pupils' skills in mathematics so that they can solve problems fluently in a range of contexts
  - ensuring that support for all pupils who need to catch up is precisely targeted to help them reach the highest possible standards.

## **Evidence**

During the inspection, meetings were held with the headteacher, middle leaders, members of the governing body and representatives of the local authority to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. The school improvement plan was evaluated. Learning walks were taken jointly with the headteacher to every class to see teaching and learning in mathematics in progress. Documentation on assessment and monitoring activities was studied.

## **Context**

Since the inspection in November 2017, three teachers have left the school. They have been replaced by two permanent members of staff and one on a fixed-term contract. Two of these are the new leaders of English and mathematics. Since September, the deputy headteacher has been on maternity leave, as has another class teacher. The previous chair of governors and several members of the governing body have left. The new chair of governors has been in post for six months. There are two governor vacancies.

## **Main findings**

You and the governors have not provided the strategic leadership necessary to improve outcomes for pupils. Your improvement plan does not provide targets to improve the school's performance. As a result, governors are not able to measure progress against targets and ensure that rapid improvements are made because of the actions you plan and implement. Your plan includes systems to monitor actions. However, these actions do not specify any expected impact. Consequently, outcomes for pupils in the end of key stage 2 tests dropped in reading and writing and remained the same in mathematics. Only half the pupils reached the expected standard in the mathematics tests in Year 6. Although you have had to deal with higher numbers of in-year transfers than the national average in key stage 2, most pupils have been in the school for enough time to enable them to achieve well. Pupils' attainment in the end of key stage 1 tests was below the national average in reading, writing and mathematics. Outcomes for children in the Reception class were lower than in 2017. You have not halted this decline in standards for the past two years.

Governors have failed to address swiftly the lack of capacity within the leadership of the school. As a result of poor governance, you have not been held to account

stringently. Too much teaching has been ineffective. Prioritisation of what needs to be done to improve pupils' chances of making satisfactory transitions to the next phase of their education has not happened. The local authority has provided support from a national leader of governance in recent weeks to stem the decline in governors' leadership.

There has been turbulence in staffing for many years. As a consequence, some year groups have had more than one teacher within an academic year. These unplanned transitions have been disruptive.

The school's systems for tracking pupils' progress are in place and understood well by you. You have trained governors recently to challenge pupils' inadequate progress, to make sure standards improve. However, your use of assessment information has not led to effective intervention and has not halted the decline in pupils' progress.

You have received help and support from the local authority. They have put support plans in place when teaching is weak. Disappointingly, your checks on the support have not been efficient. On too many occasions, the support has not had the required impact, and pupils have failed to make good progress.

Since September, experienced middle leaders have been in post to improve the teaching of English and mathematics. The leader of mathematics worked with the school in a consultancy capacity during the summer term of 2018. Her understanding of teaching across the school is beneficial. She has been able to introduce activities quickly. Likewise, the leader of English has analysed pupils' writing and is putting systems in place to ensure better progress for pupils. Despite these encouraging beginnings, you have not, as yet, finalised the action plans for these subjects. This hampers accountability processes for teaching, because expectations have been left unclear.

Attendance has improved. You have worked with families to make them aware of the benefits of education. As a result, the number of pupils with persistent absence has decreased. Overall attendance is close to the national average. You continue to work with the few remaining families where this problem persists and are reaping the success of this work.

The HMI will visit the school again in the near future.

### **External support**

The local authority has provided support continually throughout the times of staffing changes and absences. The local authority offered to appoint an interim deputy headteacher, but you declined this offer. Leadership and teaching support continues to be offered to the school to improve capacity.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the director of education for the Diocese of Bath and Wells, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Bath and North East Somerset Council. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Kathy Maddocks  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**