

Serco Inspections
Cedar House
21 William Street
Edgbaston
Birmingham
B15 1LH

T 0300 123 1231
Text Phone: 0161 6188524
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk

Direct T 0121 683 3261
Direct email: ann.morris@serco.com



13 December 2012

Shelley Sharpe
Headteacher
Thomas Russell Junior School
Gilmour Lane
Barton-Under-Needwood
Burton-on-Trent
DE13 8EU

Dear Mrs Sharpe

Requires improvement monitoring inspection visit under section 8 of the Education act 2005 to Thomas Russell Junior School

Following my visit to your school on 12 December 2012, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report on the findings of my visit. 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 October 2012. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with the headteacher, other senior leaders, the Governing Body, a representative of the local authority and a group of parents. The school improvement plan was evaluated. The inspector visited classrooms, looked at books and spoke to pupils about their work.

Context

Since the inspection in October a coordinator has been appointed to oversee the planning for more able pupils. A new post of assistant headteacher has been approved by the Governing Body and will be advertised soon.

Main findings

The school has responded with alacrity to the findings of the last inspection report. An impressive amount has been achieved in a short space of time. The school development plan has been amended so that it is sharper and the expected outcomes now include quantifiable targets. There are whole school plans and separate plans for each subject which interlink well with each other. At the same time, the leadership structure has been completely rejigged so that senior leaders have more delegated responsibilities. Their effectiveness in these new roles is evaluated through new performance management arrangements. The governing body knows the school well and has provided vital challenge and support to the school in formulating these changes.

Assessments of pupils' work are carefully tracked over time to check on the progress pupils are making and to target extra support at any pupils who need help in catching up. The coordinator for more able pupils has enthusiastically set about ensuring teachers set sufficiently challenging work and that pupils have high expectations of themselves. The school's tracking shows a marked discrepancy between the published results pupils join this school with and the results of tests pupils take during their first three weeks in the school. This means the baseline from which pupils begin Year 3 is ambiguous.

A consultant has been engaged to coach teachers in improving their practice. Senior leaders have begun to check whether teachers' lesson planning is challenging enough and lesson observations conducted since the last inspection have found almost all teaching to be good. Parents speak highly of the school and recognise it is pushing hard for improvement. They say it has been transformed from what it was like a few years' ago.

Senior leaders and governors are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection. Following the visit to the school, HMI recommend that further action is taken to:

- reconcile differences between the Key Stage 1 test results and the tests Year 3 pupils take on joining the school.
- arrange a further visit by HMI in autumn 2013 to review the impact the school has had in implementing its development plan.

Ofsted will continue to monitor the school until its next section 5 inspection.

External support

The local authority has advised the school on redrafting its development plan. It has also provided the funding to enable the headteacher to access expertise from the headteacher of another local school.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Staffordshire.

Yours sincerely

David Anstead
Her Majesty's Inspector