

Serco Inspections
Colmore Plaza
20 Colmore Circus
Queensway
Birmingham
B4 6AT

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

Direct T 0121 679 9164
Direct email:
Tim.Ogbourn@serco.com



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Elizabeth Maycock
Headteacher
Little Waltham Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School
The Street
Little Waltham
Chelmsford
CM3 3NY

Dear Mrs Maycock

Requires improvement monitoring inspection visit under section 8 of the Education act 2005 to Little Waltham Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 18 January 2013, 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 November 2012. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with the headteacher and other school leaders, members of the Governing Body and representatives of the local authority and diocese. Checks were made on the school's systems for monitoring the performance of pupils and staff. The school improvement plan was evaluated, taking into account amendments made following the last inspection. A brief tour of the school was made, accompanied by the headteacher.

Context

Since the inspection in November 2012, there have been no changes in the context of the school. One teacher is retiring with effect from Easter.

Main findings

The school has revised its improvement plan to take into account the areas for improvement identified at the recent inspection. Immediate action has been taken to reorganise the teaching of phonics (the sounds letter make) in classes 1, 2 and 3. Teaching is being improved by providing clear guidance to teachers on the way they plan their lessons and how they check on pupils' progress during lessons. Teaching assistants have received additional training to help them be more effective in supporting pupils in the classroom and in keeping teachers informed about the pupils they work with. Improvements are planned to ensure that the support for disabled pupils and those with special educational is thoroughly documented.

The school has a clear programme for monitoring the quality of teaching and learning. This includes short drop-in visits to lessons by the headteacher as well as longer formal lesson observations, involving senior and middle leaders. These take into account the expectations of the national teaching standards. Regular checks are made of teachers' planning and the work in pupils' books. Teachers regularly update their assessments of how well pupils are doing in reading, writing and mathematics. The records are collated to provide overviews for each year group that are reported to governors. The records are also analysed to make sure that there are no unacceptable variations between different groups of pupils. The headteacher meets with each class teacher to check that all pupils are on target to make good progress.

Governors have a clear understanding of the strengths of the school and the areas where it needs to improve. They ask searching questions to hold senior leaders accountable for the school's performance. They consulted parents following the last inspection and now plan to make this a regular event. Individual governors are assigned to monitor each part of the improvement plan and through this work they maintain the focus on improvement.

Senior leaders and governors have begun to take effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection. Following the visit to the school, I recommend that further action is taken to sharpen the improvement plan by:

- providing more detail in the section on provision for pupils with disabilities and those with special educational needs
- devising further whole-school training to ensure that all staff are aware of the range of strategies they can use to help students to deepen their understanding and show more initiative in their learning
- making it clear who is leading each aspect of the improvement plan
- incorporating term-by-term targets for pupils' attainment and progress in each year-group
- ensuring that monitoring focuses on what difference the planned actions make to the quality of teaching and to pupils' learning and progress.

Ofsted will continue to monitor the school until its next section 5 inspection. The school has agreed to provide regular updates on pupils' progress. In addition, a further visit will be scheduled to review the impact of the school's improvement work.

External support



The school is being supported appropriately by the local authority and diocesan school improvement officers. Both agencies have been involved in helping the school to finalise its improvement plan. An advisory teacher is due to provide training and advice on the teaching of phonics (the sounds that letter make). The school is drawing on local networks for advice and opportunities to observe good practice.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Essex and The Diocesan Director of Education for Chelmsford.

Yours sincerely

Stephen Abbott
Her Majesty's Inspector