

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 6799158
Direct email: rachel.dayan@serco.com



Sheila Day
Marshland St James VC Primary School and Nursery
School Road
Marshland St James
Wisbech
PE14 8EY

Dear Mrs Day

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Marshland St James VC Primary School and Nursery

Following my visit to your school on 28 June 2013, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report 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 February 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you, the Governing Body and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. A range of information was reviewed, including data concerning pupils' attainment and progress, and the school's improvement plans. A learning walk was carried out as well as a visit to a lesson.

Context

A new headteacher has been appointed to start at in September 2013, following the retirement of the current headteacher. Two new teachers are also expected to start at this time.

Main findings

The most recent results for Year 6 pupils' reading show improvement and are in line with standards expected for their age; however, overall, achievements are too variable.

Teachers' assessments of pupils' attainment are not consistently reliable and sometimes show significant differences from the results obtained from national tests. This unreliability means that it cannot be assured that teachers pitch their lesson planning at exactly the right level for each pupil.

Furthermore, although there is routine monitoring of pupils' progress towards reaching their targets this does provide an accurate evaluation because of the weakness in teachers' assessment. Schools leaders and governors therefore do not have a full understanding of the school's effectiveness.

There has been an effective focus on pupils at risk of not reaching their targets with subsequent improvement in their rates of progress; however this is based on assessment information that may not always be accurate.

The marking of pupils' work is a weakness, as it was at the inspection in February 2013. Many comments from teachers are too broad to provide guidance to pupils about how they can do better. Pupils are often set questions as part of the marking to help them improve their work but are not provided with an opportunity to respond.

Actions plans have been drawn up to address the weaknesses identified at the last inspection. These are detailed and show the intended impact of the actions to be taken on pupils' learning. On-going evaluation of the school's actions does not always focus on whether they are succeeding in improving learning.

Governors have undertaken additional training since the inspection and are increasingly able to evaluate the school's work. However as reported above they are impeded by unreliable data about pupils' attainment and progress.

Senior leaders and governors are not taking sufficiently effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the last section 5 inspection. While the school is moving the right direction the effectiveness of actions taken since the inspection to improve pupils' learning have been inconsistent.

The school should take immediate action to:

- ensure teachers' assessment of pupils' attainments are accurate
- mark pupils' work thoroughly with appropriately detailed guidance about how to do better, and provide opportunity for them to respond to questions raised as part of the marking
- ensure the evaluation of action plans focuses on whether pupils' learning is improving

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

External support

The local authority has an accurate understanding of the school's effectiveness. It is already providing support for the in-coming headteacher to tackle the inconsistencies reported in this monitoring visit letter. Support has been brokered from leading practitioners in the area.

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

Yours sincerely

Charlie Henry
Her Majesty's Inspector