

Tribal
1-4 Portland Square
Bristol
BS2 8RR

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

Direct T 0117 311 5359
Direct F 0117 315 0430
Email: christina.bannerman@tribalgroup.com

17 September 2013

Celia Rich
Headteacher
Elson Junior School
Exmouth Road
Gosport
PO12 4EX

Dear Ms Rich

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Elson Junior School

Following my visit to your school on 17 September 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 June 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

School leaders and governors are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection.

Further action should be taken to:

- improve achievement in writing for all pupils, particularly, but not exclusively, in Years 5 and 6.

Evidence

During the visit I met with you, the deputy headteacher and other school leaders. I had telephone conversations with a local authority representative and the Chair of the Governing Body. I met with four other governors. I went on a tour of the school site and visited classes in all year groups. I reviewed the school action plan, pupils' progress targets and the 2013 Key Stage 2 results.

Context

Since the section 5 inspection two teachers have left the school. There have been a number of changes made to leadership roles and responsibilities. Two new teachers have been appointed to year leader roles in Years 3 and 5 respectively. Years 4 and 6 now have leaders appointed from within the teaching staff. The leader for mathematics has been promoted to assistant headteacher. The special educational needs leader is currently on maternity leave and her role is being covered by a seconded special needs coordinator for one day per week, working with another teacher to strengthen leadership capacity in this area. Learning support assistants have now been assigned to year groups and classes.

Main findings

Since the section 5 inspection in June school leaders have taken decisive and prompt action to improve teaching and raise standards in English and mathematics. Changes to leadership responsibilities focus on the areas identified for improvement. Wisely, school leaders have been given sufficient time to fulfil their roles and are in the process of creating better systems to help them check the quality of teaching, the standard of work in pupils' books and to evaluate assessments. New appointments to leadership roles are strategic and target the areas of most need, notably Year 5 pupils who must make rapid and sustained progress in order to meet national expectations by the end of Year 6. A new teacher has also been appointed to lead teaching in Year 3 to ensure that pupils' additional needs are identified quickly and gaps closed. Training is scheduled for school leaders to make better use of information about pupils' levels and progress. This training will be extended to all staff.

Shrewd deployment of teaching staff and learning support assistants across all year groups is now in place. School leaders have ensured that there are opportunities to share from good or outstanding practice in all year groups. Teachers now work in cohesive teams to plan and review their work and the progress of their pupils. Learning support assistants have been carefully placed with targeted groups and have been given better direction and training to support their work with these pupils.

School leaders and governors recognise that at the time of the section 5 inspection they had not evaluated sufficiently closely the impact of provision on disabled pupils and those with special educational needs. Helpful and more focused plans are in place to improve identification of individual pupils' needs and to make sure that any extra help is having a direct impact on pupils' attainment and progress.

For all pupils, senior leaders have set challenging targets that are checked at key points during the year. It is clear from speaking to teachers that their expectations have been raised: school leaders are determined that pupils will achieve results that

compare favourably with national averages and are fully aware that this means that some pupils need to catch up rapidly.

Improvements to teaching since the section 5 inspection have focused on developing greater independence in pupils. School leaders piloted guided group work in mathematics in one year group and have now extended this across the school. Pupils work purposefully in carefully selected groups according to ability, need and topic. They then work independently on challenging tasks, receive precisely targeted teaching from their teachers, or work on tasks managed by learning support assistants, supervised closely by teachers. It is too soon to measure the impact of this approach on pupils' overall achievement, but it is clear from evidence provided by school leaders that pupils' interest and self-reliance are improving.

Key Stage Two results in 2013 showed considerable improvement in reading and mathematics when compared with previous years, reflecting the improvements over time in reading and the recent focus on pupils' mathematical knowledge and skills. As in 2012, writing remains weaker than reading and mathematics. School leaders have introduced a set of key principles for neat presentation and handwriting. Further work on targeting writing skills, in addition to learning to write in different genres, is planned.

The new arrangement for teachers to plan jointly in year teams is a growing strength of the school and is beginning to have an impact on the quality of pupils' writing. For example, during the monitoring inspection visit, Year 4 pupils were excited, motivated and challenged by an activity designed to stimulate instructional writing and introduce the topic of the Egyptians. Through a carefully planned group activity of 'mummifying' a real fish, they read and improved their own written instructions, solved problems together and practised their spoken English.

Governors are continuing to challenge the school and push for higher standards, as noted in the section 5 inspection in June 2013. They recognise that they need to sharpen even further their focus on particular groups of pupils at risk of underachievement, particularly those pupils who are disabled or who have special educational needs. They plan to become more involved in school leaders' monitoring of teaching and achievement and contribute even more forcefully to the school's evaluation of the impact of any new approaches.

External support

The local authority has provided useful support for the school including a partnership with a local teaching school and support from the mathematics subject inspector. The school has also benefited from training from the local authority English advisory team and there is further support planned to help improve the provision and outcomes for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs. The lead

learning partner is planning further leadership support for school leaders in their new roles. The school also benefits from sharing good practice in an alliance of 30 local schools in the Gosport Education Improvement Partnership.

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

Yours sincerely

Janet Pearce
Her Majesty's Inspector