

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 9161
Direct email: ann.morris@serco.com



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Andrew Robertson
Headteacher
Stretham Community Primary School
Wood Lane
Stretham
Ely
CB6 3JN

Dear Mr Robertson

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Stretham Community Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 3 February 2014, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the 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 visit was the first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in October 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Senior leaders and governors are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement following the section 5 inspection. The school should take further action to:

- ensure that your constructive feedback to staff includes examples of their good teaching that should be shared with others
- use your data analysis of pupils' progress to focus lesson observations on the progress made by particular groups
- introduce a programme of learning walks to evaluate, and provide specific feedback to, teaching assistants
- add pupils' views to your profiles of teaching and its impact on learning
- develop the role of subject leaders more rapidly to ensure that pupils' progression in all subjects is promoted, including through cross-curricular work in literacy
- give further consideration to the use of the school environment as an opportunity to exemplify high standards.

Evidence

During the visit, I held meetings with you, the deputy headteacher, the pupil premium coordinator, two governors including the Chair of the Governing Body, and a representative of the local authority. I evaluated the school improvement plan, reviewed monitoring records, and visited classes to see pupils and staff at work.

Context

There have been no changes to staffing since the inspection.

Main findings

Since the previous inspection, you have:

- evaluated and adapted your raising achievement plan, which is aligned to the key issues for improvement
- introduced a new approach to lesson observations based securely on the Teachers' Standards, which is followed-up by individual action plans
- provided a wide range of professional development for teachers and teaching assistants with a strong focus on pupils' learning
- focused the school on improving pupils' writing, using the outstanding teaching in Year 6 effectively to model expectations of staff and pupils
- collaborated as a new senior leadership team, for example to review the quality of teachers' planning and to develop your specific responsibilities
- started the Cambridgeshire 'getting to good' support programme which is informing the evaluation and focus of your termly operational plan.

You started to take action immediately after the inspection; staff and governors are committed to moving the school to good quickly. Staff training is proving effective because you are evaluating the impact on pupils' learning and achievement within a clear timescale. With other senior leaders, your new approach to lesson observations is giving teachers constructive feedback about areas to improve. This does not currently extend to teaching assistants. The individual action plans that follow lesson observations and the sharp focus of subsequent observations are contributing to improvements in teaching. Nevertheless, the good features of teaching observed are not identified clearly enough to promote more sharing of best practice. Your paired work between staff provides a secure basis for this. The expectation that staff bring pupils' work to staff meetings on a weekly basis is also helping to share good ideas and approaches. However, displays in classrooms and public areas of the school are not always exploited as an opportunity to showcase pupils' work.

Your improvement plan identifies writing as a high priority. Pupils' work shows that your strategies are beginning to take effect. In particular, staff are marking conscientiously in order to give pupils clear and helpful feedback about how to improve their writing. In almost all classes pupils are now well aware of their writing targets, are keen to do read their work to the class, listen to other pupils and offer criticism sensitively. Although at an early stage, good examples of writing in the context of other subjects are emerging. The best examples show that planning has

taken good account of pupils' progression in literacy and other subjects. For example, as part of a topic about China in Year 6 pupils' writing inspired by the willow pattern was complemented by learning about mixing tints and shades to create willow pattern paintings. However, subject leadership is not sufficiently developed across all subjects to make this good practice common.

Following training governors are more confident about using performance data to challenge underachievement. Governors are also using Ofsted publications analytically to question the effectiveness of the school's actions, for example about the use of pupil premium funding. This, together with the appointment of a pupil premium coordinator is helping to focus resources on closing gaps in performance between different groups of pupils. The individual teacher files that are being developed contain a wide range of information about teachers' effectiveness. This includes analysis of progress made by different groups of pupils. However, pupils' views are currently underused to inform the school's evaluation.

Ofsted may 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 is providing support through professional development for senior leaders, governors and staff. The school is positive about the quality and usefulness of training although some is too recent to evaluate the impact. Improved links with other schools include visits by all staff to observe good practice.

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

Yours sincerely

Ian Middleton
Her Majesty's Inspector