

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 9158
Direct email: rachel.dayan@serco.com



26 March 2014

Lucy Burman
Headteacher
Blakesley Church of England Primary School
The Green
Blakesley
Towcester
NN12 8RD

Dear Mrs Burman

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Blakesley Church of England Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 25 March 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 January 2014. 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 identified at the recent section 5 inspection. The school should take further action to:

- build on recent improvements in the quality of teaching, partly by developing positive relationships with colleagues from support schools
- increase the variety of strategies used to teach mathematics
- create an executive summary of your school improvement plan and share it with all those involved in improving the school

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you, two teachers, three governors, and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. I evaluated your school improvement plan. You took me on a tour of the school and we made brief visits to each of your three classes.

Main findings

The teachers who have been appointed as literacy and mathematics coordinators are rising to this new, increased challenge. You have supported them in their roles and they have undertaken training to help them develop. They are enthusiastic about the further, necessary developments which lie ahead. They are beginning to have an increased, positive impact on whole school improvement. Pupils' books considered during a work scrutiny were excellent and show detailed, formative marking and high expectations.

You are fully committed to improving the quality of teaching in your school. You have given considerable support to your teaching staff with a view to them improving their practice. This includes team teaching and assistance with planning appropriate lessons.

Your mathematics coordinator has had training on how to better challenge more-able pupils. Appropriate levels of challenge, including questioning during lessons, are now a focus of lesson observations and are mandatory requirements of teachers' planning. Questioning requires further development, and your teachers are working on this and other aspects of teaching with good and outstanding practitioners from local schools. Your teachers are enthusiastic about these partnerships, though it is too early to judge their impact.

Opportunities for pupils to develop their mathematics skills in other subjects are increasing, though it is too early to judge any impact other than increased pupil engagement. New resources for the teaching of mathematics have been bought; teachers will require training in order to use them to best effect. Increasing subject knowledge and the variety of strategies to teach mathematics requires development.

Your literacy coordinator has spent a long time considering pupil progress data. As a result, her understanding of this has improved and she is committed to developing this further. She has trained her colleagues in how to teach phonics more effectively.

Governors agree with the findings of your recent inspection and they have undertaken a wide range of activity to help improve their practice. A comprehensive governance manual has been created which clearly outlines terms of reference, constitution and functions. There is now an induction policy for new governors. A skills audit has been carried out. Link governors have been appointed for literacy and mathematics; the link governor for mathematics has visited the school with a view to better understanding his role in school improvement. Four other governors have conducted learning walks. A template has been created for governors to use after each visit to help establish consistency and show any impact of their involvement. The revised action plan shows that governors have an increased role in monitoring activity. All the recent work undertaken by the governing body is a reflection of their commitment to improving the school.

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

Your local authority representative has increased the funding available for staff training. Phonics training has been undertaken and further training on analysing data is planned. You value the training you have received in leadership and you are benefitting from the support of a local headteacher, an arrangement which was brokered by the local authority. Your adviser understands your school's issues very well. She is in regular contact with you to offer support and she visits you every six weeks to provide advice and challenge, most recently with regards to revising your improvement planning.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Northamptonshire and the Director of Education at the Diocese.

Yours sincerely

Ian McNeilly
Her Majesty's Inspector