

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 9168
Direct email:
narinder.kurana@serco.com



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Mrs Anne Smith
Acting Headteacher
Barry Primary School
Barry Road
Northampton
NN1 5JS

Dear Mrs Smith

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Barry Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 5 June 2014, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection 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 March 2014. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Senior leaders and governors are not taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the last section 5 inspection. The school should take immediate action to:

- sharpen the school improvement plan by including clear milestones and targets related to pupils' achievements, particularly for those for whom the school receives pupil premium funding, so that governors can check the extent to which the school's actions are being successful
- address the root cause of underachievement in writing by providing pupils with the skills to be able to express their ideas in writing more clearly
- ensure that checks on teaching by senior leaders and those responsible for leading key stages, are more frequent and draw upon a wide range of evidence, to provide teachers with precise recommendations of how to improve their practice
- ensure that governors who have responsibility for subjects and aspects of the school's work, increase further their level of scrutiny by undertaking regular visits to check the rate of improvement.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with senior leaders, a group of eight pupils, members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority, to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. I evaluated your plans for improvement. I considered documentation relating to the monitoring of teaching. I reviewed your most recent data relating to pupils' achievement. We conducted a tour of the school. I considered the quality of pupils' learning in a range of subjects.

Context

Since the last section 5 inspection, you and the acting deputy headteacher have been successful in being appointed as permanent headteacher and deputy headteacher respectively. One member of staff has resigned and left the school and has been replaced by a teacher returning from a term's sabbatical leave.

Main findings

You have worked closely with other senior leaders to devise a detailed school improvement plan. This identifies appropriate actions and makes it clear who is responsible for leading actions and evaluating their effectiveness. The lack of milestones or measures of success relating to pupils' achievement, however, makes it difficult for governors to be able to check the extent to which actions are having a positive impact on pupils' learning. At this stage, only a few points for action have been addressed.

You have begun to develop the skills of the leaders of all key stages, who include those responsible for leading English, mathematics and special educational needs. They are developing their skills in how to triangulate evidence to judge the quality of teaching. However, they have had few opportunities in which to apply their skills to check upon the quality of teaching in their areas of responsibility. Your checks on the quality of teaching and learning through visits to lessons have not been frequent enough to provide individual staff with detailed recommendations on how to improve their practice. Staff have not yet benefited from observing the best practice in the school of the teaching of mathematics and writing. As a result, teaching is not improving quickly enough.

You are reviewing your curriculum in light of changes to statutory requirements which come into effect from September 2014. At this stage, however, pupils' mathematics and topic books show that they have few opportunities in which to apply their skills in a range of other subjects. Similarly, pupils are not being provided with a sufficient range of activities to help them to broaden their vocabulary. This is limiting their ability to express their ideas clearly in their written work.

Teachers are moderating pupils' work more frequently and ensuring that the assessment of pupils' learning is accurate. You have used this information to track more

closely how well individuals and groups of pupils are doing. Your tracking reveals gaps in attainment between pupils' reading and writing skills. While pupils' progress in reading is improving, pupils are not making the same rate of progress in writing. This is a barrier for securing good levels of achievement in literacy.

The governing body has not yet undertaken an external review of the school's use of the pupil premium. In the meantime, they have assigned a governor to check more closely the extent to which funding is having a positive impact on the achievement and personal development of pupils for whom the pupil premium provides support. This is indicative of the closer scrutiny which the governing body is beginning to undertake on the school's work.

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 advisor has a clear understanding of the strengths and areas for development in the school. She has brokered support from the Teaching School Alliance led by the Northampton School for Boys however; this is at an early stage of development. The school has benefited from working with other schools in the Northampton Town Learning Partnership. This has helped develop teachers' skills in making accurate assessments of pupils' work, through standardisation and moderation exercises.

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

Yours sincerely

David Carter

Her Majesty's Inspector