

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 6799169
Direct email:
mathew.mitchell@serco.com



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Tracey Bowman
Headteacher
Lincoln Birchwood Junior School
Larchwood Crescent
Lincoln
LN6 0NL

Dear Mrs Bowman

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Lincoln Birchwood Junior School

Following my visit to your school on 16 July 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 taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with the headteacher, the assessment, literacy, and numeracy co-ordinators, the Governing Body, and a representative of the local authority. I toured the school, visiting all classrooms and holding discussions with pupils. I carried out a scrutiny of a sample of the pupils' workbooks jointly with the headteacher. I looked at the school's latest data on the achievement of the pupils. The school's post-inspection action plan was evaluated.

Main findings

You have responded quickly, purposefully and energetically to the inspection. You have made several improvements to the quality of teaching already. You have used information about the pupils' achievement to change the groups they are taught in and to provide more support for pupils needing additional help. The pupils are now

being provided with more opportunities to write for a wider range of purposes and in more subjects than previously.

The marking policy has been changed. The pupils' books showed that the quality of marking has improved, as a result, and that the teachers are providing the pupils with clearer guidance about their work. The pupils are finding the teachers' comments helpful and the greater opportunities they get now to respond to the teachers' comments are helping them to make better progress. The school's latest data indicate improvement in the achievement of the pupils.

You have clarified the roles and responsibilities of subject and other co-ordinators. There is now much more opportunity for them to contribute to improvements at the school. They have risen to the task enthusiastically and have already carried out several activities to check on progress with the school's action plan. As a result, they have a more-detailed and precise view of what still needs to be improved and are responding to what they have learned.

The review of governance was carried out quickly. It has led to useful changes in the way that the governing body is working. It is better informed now, as a result of more-sharply focused activities in school to find out how well things are going. It is using the information obtained to monitor closely the implementation of the school's action plan. In combination with the improvements in leadership and management, those changes are leading to a faster pace of change than previously.

The school's action plan has several strengths and is focused closely on the areas for improvement from the inspection. It does not, however, always make sufficiently clear exactly what actions are intended, or when precisely.

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 school has benefited already from some effective support from the local authority. The support has resulted in a prompt and successful outcome from the review of governance. It has also contributed to the improvements in leadership and management at the school. You are considering with the local authority several, potentially useful initiatives, including a range of links with other schools where there is good practice, but these have not yet been worked up into a clear plan of action.

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

Yours sincerely

Clive Moss
Her Majesty's Inspector