

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 9146
Direct email: clare.benson@serco.com



17 September 2014

Rebecca James
Forestdale Primary School
Wareham Road
Frankley
Birmingham
B45 0JS

Dear Mrs James

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Forestdale Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 16 September 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. Please pass on my thanks to everyone who gave of their time to speak to me.

The visit was the first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in April 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:

- strengthen the targets in the plan for raising attainment. Include targets for the proportions of pupils who will make better than expected progress and make sure that this is close to or above the national median figures for last year
- raise the target for the proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in the phonics screening check
- in addition to the implementation of the early reading programme, make sure that books read by the youngest pupils, including those taken home to read with parents, are fully decodable

- consider the use of standardised tests in reading and mathematics while the school works towards a system for assessing progress in the new national curriculum.

Evidence

During the inspection, I held meetings and discussions with you, other senior and middle leaders, members of the governing body and the school's improvement partner to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. I also spoke by telephone to a representative of the local authority. The school's plan for raising attainment was evaluated. I also toured the school and visited classrooms.

Context

There have been several changes of staff at all levels since the school was inspected in April. The staffing complement is now more stable and subject and phase leaders are in post. Two members of staff remain on leave and are anticipated to return to the school during the course of this academic year.

Main findings

You and the governing body took swift steps to strengthen leadership. There are now permanent members of staff in post to lead on important areas of the school's work including English and mathematics and to lead the work of different year groups. Staff spoke with enthusiasm and commitment about the steps they are taking to help move the school's effectiveness to good. They have a secure understanding of the need to balance innovation with time for reflection and evaluation. A strong culture of monitoring and review is becoming embedded. You, senior staff and middle leaders are all playing a part in reviewing the school's work and triangulating evidence about pupils' progress from a suitably wide range of sources. We discussed the merits and potential drawbacks of moving away from giving judgement grades for teaching in individual lessons and this is something that you are thinking about.

Your plan for raising attainment is appropriately focused on where improvement is most needed and sets out what will be done to raise achievement in important aspects of the school's work. There are ambitious targets for the amount of progress the current Year 6 will make in writing and mathematics. The target for progress in reading is more cautious. In order for the school's performance to be judged good, you need to pay attention to the proportions exceeding expected progress. The proportion also needs to be close to the national figure overall, and for pupils of low, average or high prior attainment. In addition, the target for the proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in the national phonics screening check at the end of Year 1 is cautious and does not match the more demanding target that has been set as part of the early reading programme. The target in your raising attainment

plan should be revised upwards. I know that before this visit was finished you had already begun to work on revising targets.

The early reading programme has begun to be implemented and changes have been made to how pupils are grouped for phonics sessions. Staff are receiving training and support in teaching phonics and early reading. Work to review the reading scheme books has not been completed yet, but you and your staff are aware of the requirement in the National Curriculum that, in the early stages, pupils should be taught to read using fully decodable books.

You have been involved in initiatives with other schools in the local area, for example, taking part in the pilot scheme organised by HMI to support schools in reviewing and evaluating one another's performance. The review that took place in July has given some helpful feedback and areas for development. You have been active in seeking support from a range of colleagues and external partners to help you drive improvements. Although the school has been through a challenging time over the past year, this has not been used as an excuse. There is a sense of optimism about the future.

Ofsted may carry out further visits and, where necessary, provide further support and challenge to the school until its next section 5 inspection. I do not intend to visit again in the near future, but I would be grateful if you could send me regular updates, for example, copies of your reports to the governing body. I will make contact with a school in Stoke-on-Trent to discuss the possibility of a visit to look at the teaching of reading.

External support

You are making good use of support and challenge that you have sought from the educational consultancy that works with you. It is clear that you and your staff are open to change and seek support and advice from colleagues within Birmingham and from other local authorities if necessary.

Birmingham local authority has not been involved closely with the school in recent times and has not had a significant impact on the progress that has been made so far.

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

Yours sincerely

Linda McGill
Her Majesty's Inspector