

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 9169
Direct email: mathew.mitchell@serco.com

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Ms Sara McAdam
Headteacher
Dovelands Primary School
Hinckley Road
Leicester
LE3 0TJ

Dear Mrs McAdam

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Dovelands Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 17 December 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 September 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:

- help representatives of the governing body to check more easily whether leaders' actions are making enough impact on accelerating pupils' achievement by:
 - including the school's key termly achievement milestones and targets in the school improvement plan
 - identifying more frequent first-hand opportunities for representatives of the governing body to monitor the school's work.

Evidence

During the inspection, I met with you and other school leaders, the Chair and one other representative of the Governing Body, and a group of pupils to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. A telephone conversation was held with a representative of the local authority. The school's improvement plans were evaluated. I scrutinised minutes of governing body meetings and checked leaders' documents to record the outcomes of monitoring activities. I also accompanied you on a tour of the school to observe children learning in each class and to look at work in their books.

Main findings

You, and your staff team, are working hard to address the issues identified for improvement at the time of your last inspection. Staff show a strong determination to improve the overall effectiveness of the school.

You have devised comprehensive plans to improve the school. The improvement plans contain appropriate timescales and clearly outline the actions you intend to take. You have wasted no time in beginning to implement the plans. The plans include arrangements for how each action will be checked and outline the impact you intend the actions to make on improving pupils' achievement by the end of the academic year. The plans include some opportunities for governors to check the school's work. However, these opportunities are too limited. You have agreed to work with representatives of the governing body to identify more frequent first-hand opportunities for them to check that the school's actions are on track. You have also agreed to include some of the school's key termly pupil achievement milestones in the plans, to help the governing body to check whether plans are accelerating pupils' achievement quickly enough, as the year progresses. You have agreed to submit the revised action plans to me by the end of January 2015.

Since the last inspection, you have worked effectively with staff to check the progress that different groups of pupils are making more closely. You have ensured that frequent 'pupil progress' meetings in each phase of the school identify where pupils are not making the progress expected of them. Resources have then been identified to help pupils to catch up, for example, through intervention sessions with teachers and teaching assistants. You have also ensured that work in children's books is taken into account in pupil progress meetings. This is helping to develop greater consistency in teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve.

Your mathematics leader has worked effectively with staff to devise a new calculation policy, to support pupils' better learning in mathematics. This has resulted in a sharper focus on the development of pupils' mental calculation skills. During the monitoring visit, pupils in Year 6 commented that more frequent practise of mental calculation skills was helping them to become more confident mathematicians. Your literacy leader has worked effectively to ensure that pupils

across the school are being given more frequent opportunities to develop spelling, grammar and punctuation skills.

You are holding leaders to account more effectively by ensuring that there are firm plans in place to evaluate their impact on improving pupils' achievement. During the monitoring visit I identified that senior leaders do not always check carefully enough that dedicated leadership time for subject leaders is used as efficiently as possible. You have agreed to sharpen your practice in this area.

Representatives of the governing body are becoming increasingly skilled in challenging you, and other senior leaders. For example, a representative of the governing body carried out a detailed piece of work to check on the school's provision for pupils supported through the pupil premium. This resulted in a challenge about staff awareness (particularly teaching assistants) of which children were being supported through the pupil premium in the school. You have worked effectively with staff to improve their knowledge and understanding as a result of this 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

You have received effective external support since the last inspection, which has helped you to begin to improve the school. The local authority, through a school improvement advisor, has supported your leadership team to better understand their roles, and to help them develop the skills to monitor the work of others more effectively. The local authority has also helped to broker a partnership with a school recognised for its excellent practice; and has organised a 'team around the school' meeting which resulted in additional funding being provided to you to help improve the quality of teaching. Several teachers have attended training, organised by the local Teaching School Alliance to develop their skills. There is evidence that the training is making a positive impact.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, and the Director of Children's Services for Leicester City local authority.

Yours sincerely

Jeremy Spencer
Her Majesty's Inspector