

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 9154
Direct email: aidan.dunne@serco.com

22 December 2014

Maz Howes
Deputy Headteacher
Highfield Junior and Infant School
Highfield Road
Saltley
Birmingham
B8 3QF

Dear Mrs Howes

Special measures monitoring inspection of Highfield Junior and Infant School

Following my visit to your school on 11 December 2014, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave during the inspection and for the time you made available to discuss the actions which have been taken since the school's recent section 5 inspection.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in September 2014.

Evidence

During this inspection, meetings were held with you and two of the three assistant headteachers, the Chair of the Governing Body and a representative of the local authority. The local authority's statement of action and the school's improvement plan, which are merged into one document, were evaluated.

Context

Since the inspection in September the local authority have applied to the Department for Education to have the governing body removed and an interim executive board put in place. This application is being considered. The headteacher has been absent from the school since May 2014. Two teachers will be leaving the school at the end of the autumn term 2014, one of whom is a year leader. One parent governor has resigned. The local authority has brokered the support of two National Leaders of Education (NLE), one from Leigh Junior and Infant School and one from Colmore First School. Leigh Junior and Infant School is being used as a support school.

The quality of leadership and management at the school

You and the other senior leaders are a cohesive team. During our meetings you demonstrated that you are united in your desire to improve the school. However, this has been made less easy because clear leadership structures have not been in place throughout the duration of the headteacher's absence. No formal arrangements have been made for you to become the acting headteacher. As a result, the school has been without a designated person with overall responsibility since May. You are working hard to ensure that the day-to-day running of the school is maintained. The lack of a clear statement of roles and responsibilities, however, is hindering you from taking a strategic view of school improvement.

You and the senior leaders acted swiftly to improve the safeguarding issues reported at the last inspection. The safeguarding policy has been updated and shared with staff. However, it has not yet been ratified by the governing body. Staff have a copy of the most recent guidance about keeping children safe. Records relating to child protection are stored securely and you have plans to introduce a more robust system for recording incidents that are reported. The checks made on staff before they take up employment have been recorded in more detail.

The appraisals for support staff have been completed appropriately but performance targets have not been set with teachers. This means that teachers cannot be held to account for the work they are being required to do to improve teaching and accelerate the progress of pupils. The support the school has in place for teachers whose work is found to require improvement is inadequate. You have plans in place to address this if practice does not improve.

There is an understanding within the senior leadership team that more regular and rigorous checks need to be made on teaching. While the school improvement plan includes regular monitoring activities, these are not yet fully in place. As a result, you do not have a detailed view of the quality of teaching across all year groups.

You and the senior leaders have welcomed the support of the National Leaders of Education and the support school, and are keen to improve policies and procedures in light of the coaching you are receiving. As a result of joint work, a review of reading books has been completed. New books have been ordered to provide pupils with a wider range of reading material. This order includes books that have words in them that can be 'sounded out' by pupils and are designed to support pupils in developing early reading skills. The literacy leaders have received training in phonics (the sounds that letters make) and plan to share this with staff during a training day in January. Similarly, the senior teaching assistants and the early years leader have visited the support school to observe good practice. The NLE from the support school has a clear view of the help that is required to help the school to move out of special measures. It is too early to evaluate the impact of her work.

Governance has not improved and remains inadequate. Governors have not contributed to any improvement in the school since the inspection in September. Their attendance at meetings is low. No curriculum committee meeting has been held this academic year. There is no performance management in place for the deputy headteacher or the senior leaders. Clear lines of accountability and an acting headteacher have not been secured. The Chair of Governors acknowledges that the governing body has been ineffective and welcomes the introduction of an interim executive board as an effective way of ensuring the school is able to move forward rapidly.

The local authority's statement of action and the school improvement plan have been merged into one document. This, once some amendments have been made, will provide a clear route map for senior leaders on the school's journey out of special measures. The school's section of the action plan is appropriately focused on the areas for improvement from the inspection and states clearly who will be responsible for each action. It does not state clearly enough how the success of the actions will be checked to ensure that the quality of teaching is improving. There are sensible milestones in place for the improvement in the quality of teaching term by term. There are also end of year targets for pupils in reading, writing and mathematics. This will help you and governors to measure the progress that is being made. The local authority's statement for action outlines the support that has been brokered but is not precise enough in how much support will be offered. It also lacks detail in the exact focus of the support.

After the inspection, the local authority was too slow in ensuring that a school improvement advisor was deployed to the school. As a result, the support of the advisor has only recently begun. The local authority has made an application to have

the governing body removed and replaced with an interim executive board. This application is being considered by the Department for Education. The local authority advisor has informed the governing body of its responsibility to formally secure an acting headteacher for the school but, to date, no action has been taken by the governors. A monitoring task force group has been set up to measure, every half term, how much progress the school is making. A lack of strategic planning on the part of the local authority means that the support brokered with the two National Leaders in Education was slow to get started and valuable improvement time has been wasted.

Following the monitoring inspection the following judgements were made:

The local authority's statement of action is fit for purpose, but it needs to be strengthened by:

- including the precise actions that will be taken by local authority advisors to support the improvement of the school
- including the agreed amount and the focus of the support to be provided by the National Leaders of Education.

The school's improvement plan is fit for purpose, but it needs to be strengthened by:

- including more precise information, including detailed timescales, about the checks that will be made on the quality of teaching.

The school may not appoint newly qualified teachers before the next monitoring inspection.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Governing Body, and the Director of Children's Services for Birmingham. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Rachel Howie

Her Majesty's Inspector

The letter should be copied to the following:

- Appropriate authority - Chair of the Governing Body/Interim Executive Board
- Local authority – (including where a school is an academy)
- The Secretary of State