

Tribal
Kings Orchard
One Queen Street
Bristol
BS2 0HQ

T 0300 123 1231
Text Phone: 0161 6188524
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk

Direct T 0117 311 5323
Email: suzy.smith@tribalgroup.com

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Ms Catherine Taylor
Consultant Headteacher
Kings Farm Primary School
Cedar Avenue
Gravesend
DA12 5JT

Dear Ms Taylor

Special measures monitoring inspection of Kings Farm Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 22 January 2015, 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 October 2014.

Evidence

During this inspection, meetings were held with you, two interim deputy headteachers, the interim special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO), a middle leader, the Chair of the Governing Body and another member of the governing body, the headteacher from a National Support School and two officers from the local authority. The local authority's statement of action and the school's improvement plan were evaluated. I also looked at a range of documentation, including the single central record, and walked around the school with you, briefly visiting classrooms.

Context

Since the inspection in October 2014, two teachers and two members of support staff have left the school. Three teachers have joined, including an interim SENCO. The role of deputy headteacher is held by three senior leaders, two interim leaders are seconded from the local National Support School, and share the post. Two teachers are absent long term. Three new members have joined the governing body.

The quality of leadership and management at the school

The section 5 inspection judgements did not come as a surprise to you or your governors, as you had already accurately evaluated the strengths and weaknesses of the school. Following the inspection, you acted decisively and rapidly to tackle the key problem of poor quality teaching in the school. Your strong leadership, passion and high expectations act as an inspiration to others. You bring a relentless approach to monitoring and evaluating the work of the school and show flexibility when responding to problems which arise.

The school's improvement plan is well constructed and aligns well with the local authority's statement of action. The school's plan provides a detailed and robust response to the areas for improvement identified in the last section 5 inspection report. The plan also includes actions to address other areas of concern such as the reliability of pupil assessment information and the need to improve how the school engages with parents. The plan provides specific success measures with useful milestones against which the impact of actions can be judged. It is clear who is responsible for leading actions, for checking whether they have been completed and for evaluating how successful the actions have been. This will usefully help leaders and governors hold staff to account for the required improvements. Staff are aware of the plan and the part they are expected to play in raising standards and improving the progress that pupils make.

You have recently increased the capacity of the school's leadership by appointing two senior leaders, seconded from the local National Support School, to share the post of interim deputy headteacher. They specifically bring experience and expertise in early years and special educational needs which are two areas that the school needs to improve. You are helping teachers who show leadership potential to build their skills and take on additional responsibilities. A newly appointed middle leader with responsibility for Key Stage 1 is now checking that teachers are assessing pupils' work accurately and setting work that is suitable for their needs. Work in Year 1 books shows that pupils' writing is beginning to improve.

The newly appointed interim SENCO has worked closely with the local authority's consultant to improve the arrangements for supporting pupils with special educational needs, including those with speech and language difficulties.

You have taken appropriate steps to improve behaviour in the school. One of the interim deputy headteachers has taken responsibility for recording any incidents of poor behaviour more systematically. Classrooms are well ordered, and this helps pupils concentrate on their learning better. The refurbished library shows a greater focus on reading within the school. During my visit to classrooms, pupils were behaving appropriately and involved in a range of learning activities.

Governors know the school well, understand their role and are actively involved in driving improvement in the school. However, the review of the pupil premium (additional government funds for pupils in receipt of free school meals and those in the care of the local authority), which was recommended in the inspection report, has not taken place. School leaders and governors are aware of their responsibility to report on the impact of this funding on the achievement of disadvantaged pupils and this is required to be completed as a matter of urgency.

The local authority has rightly increased its level of support for the school. You are being assisted well by a National Leader of Education and her school which is a National Support School. Together you are taking the necessary steps to tackle weaknesses, train staff and challenge underperformance. This well-directed support is building the confidence and skills of staff in the school.

Following the monitoring inspection the following judgements were made:

The local authority's statement of action is fit for purpose.

The school's improvement plan is fit for purpose.

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 Kent. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Theresa Phillips
Her Majesty's Inspector