

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 9165
Direct email: victoria.mortimore2@serco.com



30 January 2015

Alison Cullum
Headteacher
St Mary's Church of England Junior School
Swan Lane
Long Stratton
Norwich
NR15 2UY

Dear Mrs Cullum

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to St Mary's Church of England Junior Academy

Following my visit to your school on 30 January, 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 November 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:

- ensure that all pupils are challenged to learn at a level that stretches them
- redesign the school's lesson observation process to ensure that it places more emphasis on pupils' learning rather than teacher activity
- ensure that governors set challenging targets for a small number of key school performance indicators, and that progress towards these targets is closely monitored.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with you and other senior leaders, a small number of pupils, the Chair of the Governing Body, and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection.

The school's improvement and action plans were evaluated together with recent assessment data for all year groups. Close attention was paid to the school's lesson observation system and the use of the documentation that it uses. All classes were visited to evaluate learning.

Main findings

Since the last inspection you have made a number of improvements and these are beginning to have an effect on the quality of learning. Your own assessment data is showing that the current proportion of Year 6 pupils that are attaining expected standards is now close to national average in reading, writing and mathematics. This is a significant improvement over the picture indicated by the last national test results of 2014 which indicated these to be well below expected. Trends of improvement are also seen in other year groups. Notably, attainment gaps between boys and girls are narrowing, as is the gap between those pupils for whom the school receives extra funding through the pupil premium and their peers.

Pupils in Year 6 are making accelerated progress that is now close to national average for mathematics and writing, but above average for reading.

In class, I noted that your assessment of pupils' attainment is broadly accurate. This means that you are now able to monitor their achievement better. Teachers now have the tools to accurately judge whether they are challenging pupils to achieve their best. Despite this, I noted that a significant proportion of pupils were capable at working at more challenging levels than they were experiencing in class. This was a feature of all year groups.

I looked closely at your lesson observation records. These accurately describe the activities of the teacher. However they pay insufficient attention to the quality of learning. This means that those occasions when pupils are not being sufficiently challenged are not always identified and corrected.

Your post-inspection action plan is sufficiently detailed. Actions are clear with appropriate milestones and timescales noted. Some targets are insufficiently precise however, for example those concerning pupils' progress. This means that governors are unable to monitor progress towards these targets or hold you to account if they are not met.

You have ensured that much relevant training and updating has taken place since the last inspection. This has included participation in the local authority's support programme, assessment, and training for middle leaders. You have also redefined and clarified the roles of middle leaders and made them more accountable for pupils' progress. Much training has been undertaken on aspects of literacy, and this is very much a recent focus.

Governors bring a range of appropriate strengths to the school. They have helped steer the school through recent turbulence well. They have a good appreciation of the issues raised at the last inspection. However they acknowledge that their understanding of school performance data is not strong, and so have organised training for themselves. They appreciate the need to summarise these data, to set clear and challenging targets, and to monitor them closely. Governors notes of meetings are not in a form that makes this easy.

External support

The local authority has provided good support through its 'Norfolk from Good to Great programme'. It has also worked with the school to improve data analysis and use.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Norfolk and the Diocese Norwich.

Yours sincerely

Ian Seath
Her Majesty's Inspector

cc. Chair of the Governing Body
cc. Local authority
cc. Diocese