

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 9156
Direct email: emma.norwood@serco.com



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Linda McSweeney
Headteacher
St Pius X Catholic Primary School
Tennyson Road
Chelmsford
CM1 4HY

Dear Mrs McSweeney

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to St Pius X Catholic Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 30 January 2015, 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 October 2014. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. At its previous section 5 inspection the school was also judged to require improvement.

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:

- re-focus teachers' planning so that they are clear about what pupils will learn by the end of a lesson rather than what they will do in the lesson
- create opportunities for pupils to write more in all subjects
- make sure pupils take pride in their work and work hard in every lesson
- make sure teachers and adults working with pupils model good handwriting and that pupils know how to form letters correctly and write neatly in every lesson.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with the headteacher, other senior leaders, teachers, members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The school improvement plan was evaluated.

Context

Since the last inspection a teacher has returned from maternity leave to work part-time.

Main findings

Since the inspection you have made sure the Key Stage 1 leader has had time to support learning and teaching in Y1 and 2. She has carried out lesson observations and given good advice to teachers on how to improve pupils' learning. This is having a good impact in Year 1 where pupils are writing more and their writing is of better quality.

During the inspection we looked at pupils' work across the school. As a result it was evident that pupils do not take enough pride in how they present their work. Handwriting is not consistently good because pupils are not taught how to form and join letters correctly and apply this learning in all their written work. In some lessons teachers plan activities for pupils to do rather than planning for what they want all groups of pupils to learn by the end of the lesson. As a result not all pupils are clear about what they are learning and why. For example one pupil in a literacy lesson said she was 'writing about writing' because the focus for learning was on writing skills rather than on the audience and topic of the writing.

The school improvement plan gives a reasonable strategic view of how the school will develop over the next three years. However it is not focussed sharply enough on what must be done to get the school to good in 18 months.

Governors have a better idea of their role in supporting and challenging the school to improve. They know the strengths and weakness in pupils' achievement when they leave the school and some can compare this to pupils nationally. Governors are at the early stage of making improvements to how they monitor pupils' progress across the school. They are writing an action plan to show how they will achieve this.

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

The local authority is giving good support to the school. The school's excellence commissioner has carried out lesson observations and evaluated the school improvement plan. He has given good advice to the headteacher.

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

Yours sincerely

Julie Winyard
Her Majesty's Inspector

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