

Ofsted
Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk



26 November 2015

Ms Lorna McIsaac
Pensford Primary School
Pensford Hill
Pensford
Bristol
BS39 4AA

Dear Ms McIsaac

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Pensford Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 16 October 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 April 2015. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. At its section 5 inspection before the one that took place in April 2015, the school was also judged to require improvement.

Senior leaders and governors are not taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the last section 5 inspection in order to become a good school. Plans are not sharply focused on rapidly bringing about improvement. The school should take immediate action to:

- ensure leaders have the skills to check improvements are making a difference and to hold staff firmly to account for the achievement and progress of their pupils
- rapidly improve the quality of teaching so that it is consistently good, particularly in Years 1 to 4
- develop leadership capacity to ensure planned improvements take place with urgency and rigour
- revise the school's action plans to tackle the areas for improvement with greater focus and urgency

- increase governors' skills, knowledge and understanding of their roles to ensure they hold the headteacher firmly to account for the urgent improvements needed.

Evidence

During the inspection, I held meetings with you, and with members of the governing body, and held a telephone conversation with the Head of Education Improvement in Bath & North East Somerset to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. I evaluated the school's action plans. In addition, I reviewed a range of documentation, including the latest information about pupils' progress, and feedback to teachers following monitoring activities. You joined me on a focused learning walk, to check the impact of actions being taken to improve the school. Together, we looked at pupils' English and mathematics books. I also spoke with a group of pupils at lunchtime to seek their views on recent improvements.

Context

One teacher has returned from maternity leave. A part-time teacher and a teaching assistant joined the school in September. The school is working with Paulton Junior School, a local outstanding school.

Main findings

Your actions are not having sufficient impact in improving the quality of teaching and increasing pupils' progress. You have introduced too many changes only recently and there has been a lack of urgency in bringing about the rapid improvement needed. Consequently, the quality of teaching, particularly in Years 1 to 4, continues to give cause for concern. In addition, the progress pupils are making is inconsistent in English and mathematics. The pace of improvement is too slow.

Since the last inspection, you have focused on improving the quality of writing. In 2015, results in the reading and writing tests improved at the end of Year 2 and Year 6. However, outcomes for Year 6 pupils in the spelling, punctuation and grammar test were significantly below average. Work in books continues to show inconsistencies in teachers' expectations, particularly in Years 1 to 4. Teachers do not routinely expect enough of their pupils, especially the most-able pupils, and accept too little from them, including work which is not of a high enough standard.

The revised policy for giving pupils feedback on their work is a strength in Years 5 and 6. Pupils act on the precise advice given and improve their work as a result. However, inconsistencies remain in other year groups. You do not hold teachers to account firmly for implementing agreed school improvement actions. This is significantly slowing the pace of improvement.

Teaching assistants have visited Paulton Junior School to observe good practice. This has strengthened some aspects of their work and is helping them support pupils more effectively. However, weaknesses in their practice remain, which are slowing pupils' progress. For example, teaching assistants do not always question pupils effectively to develop their thinking and mathematical reasoning when they solve problems in this subject.

Leaders and governors do not have a clear and shared understanding of how to improve the school quickly. This is because your school action plans are not detailed enough. They do not include measurable targets linked to specific actions. Precise timescales and short-term objectives to achieve the planned outcomes are missing.

You and your staff have prepared action plans which focus on improving pupils' achievement in mathematics and English. However, the action plan for mathematics remains in draft form. As the leader for this subject, you have not done enough to accelerate pupils' progress. Work in mathematics books confirms that teachers are not planning tasks which build on what pupils can already do and understand. Too often, pupils complete work which does not stretch or challenge their thinking and understanding. This is limiting the progress pupils make in this subject.

Governors are committed to the school and have an increasing understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. They have ensured communication with parents has improved. They have used the recent review of governance to improve their practice. They are now asking you more searching questions and using their training to interrogate the school's performance information more rigorously. However, these are recent improvements. They have not demonstrated sufficient urgency in tackling the underperformance of pupils and teachers. In addition, they take too long to act upon their findings from visits to classes. This slows the pace of change.

Ofsted may carry out further monitoring inspections and, where necessary, provide further support and challenge to the school until its next section 5 inspection.

External support

The local authority has commissioned extensive external support to improve the school and support you in your role. It has provided resources to fund expertise and support from a nearby outstanding school. Nevertheless, despite this considerable investment, the school remains in a very insecure position. The local authority's own review concludes that you have made limited progress in securing good teaching and learning across the school. The local authority initiative to improve the work of teaching assistants has not been successful. Pupils' achievement and progress remain too variable.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Bath & North East Somerset.

Yours sincerely

Catherine Leahy

Her Majesty's Inspector