

Serco Inspections
20 Colmore Circus Queensway
Birmingham
B4 6AT

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



23 May 2013

Karyn Wiles
Headteacher
Sutton St James Community Primary School
Bells Drove
Sutton St James
Spalding
Lincolnshire
PE12 0JG

Dear Ms Wiles

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Sutton St James Community Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 22 May 2013, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the findings of my visit. 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 2012. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

During the visit, meetings were held with you, five members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. The school improvement plans and documents recording the outcomes of monitoring activities were evaluated. We jointly conducted a walk around school.

Context

There have been significant changes to the context of the school since the section 5 inspection. The substantive headteacher has been on extended sickness absence since February 2013. His post was covered on an interim basis by a member of the local authority's school improvement team but due to sickness absence this came to an end before the end of the spring term. The current interim headteacher was commissioned by the local authority before Easter and took up post officially at the

beginning of the summer term. She is the executive headteacher of three other local federated schools and is based at Sutton St James for the equivalent of three days a week. The head of school for one of these federated schools provides leadership at Sutton St James when the interim headteacher is not on site. One class teacher has left the school and been replaced by a teacher who has taken responsibility for the leadership of English. The governing body of the school has been restructured.

Main findings

Uncertainty about school leadership contributed to a faltering start to school improvement work after the section 5 inspection. However, since starting at the school you have swiftly got to grips with its strengths and weaknesses and improvement work is back on track.

You are quite rightly tackling weaknesses in teaching and pupils' learning with urgency. The plan you have produced to improve teaching and pupils' learning is of good quality and leaves no doubt about what is expected to be achieved by everyone and by when. You recognise that the whole school improvement plan is not good enough to be equally effective. Teachers are now receiving precise feedback from you, and from the head of one of your federated schools, about the quality of their work. They also receive the appropriate support and challenge to help them to improve. You acknowledge that not all teachers are adopting the new systems and practices that have been introduced to improve their work equally effectively.

Pupils' progress is being tracked more closely so you have a clear picture of how well individuals and groups of pupils are doing. There are early signs that pupils' progress is quickening for many pupils. However, your closer analysis has also revealed that there are relative weaknesses in pupils' basic speaking, writing and number skills which are not being addressed early enough.

You are strengthening school leadership by astutely carrying out monitoring and evaluation activities jointly with other leaders in school so that you are developing their skills and consequently their ability to play their full part in driving improvements themselves.

The governing body now receives clear and precise information about how well improvement actions are working. Governors are eager to receive training and opportunities to observe and take part in monitoring activities to further strengthen their impact.

The governing body and the local authority are very aware that they must ensure that the successful initiatives you have put in place continue to be implemented effectively regardless of any future changes in leadership if the school is to get to 'good' quickly enough.

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 all teachers implement the agreed new policies and practices to improve teaching and learning effectively so that teaching is consistently 'good'
- ensure the relative weaknesses identified in children's early speaking, writing and number skills are addressed swiftly in the Early Years Foundation Stage
- ensure the whole school improvement plan has clear measurable targets and points to check for success that will support the school in getting to 'good' swiftly
- build the skills of members of the governing body so they can carry out their role highly effectively
- ensure that school improvement continues to be driven swiftly regardless of any future changes in leadership personnel.

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 supported the substantive headteacher in the development of a systematic approach to analysis of data, improvement planning, and performance management, carrying out work scrutiny and lesson observations. It has commissioned two interim headteachers and helped members of the governing body to improve their understanding of their roles and responsibilities. The local authority has plans in place for this support to continue for as long as required for the school to get to 'good'. Work through the local collaborative partnership has brought enrichment to the curriculum. Access to the expertise and resources from the three federated schools has had an immediate and positive impact on school improvement.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Lincolnshire.

Yours sincerely

Joanne Harvey
Her Majesty's Inspector