

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

4 December 2014

Lisa Hayes and Deidre Glasgow
Interim Headteachers
Manor Fields Primary School
Penningtons
Bishop's Stortford
CM23 4LE

Dear Mrs Hayes and Mrs Glasgow

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Manor Fields Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 3 December 2014, 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 September 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:

- improve its action plans by adding milestones and deadlines, and ensuring that all success criteria are measurable
- extend the plans to cover more than one term

- ensure that the handover to the new interim headteacher is smooth and thorough, and that the pace of school improvement is maintained during this transition period.

Evidence

During the inspection, meetings were held with you, the deputy headteacher and the literacy subject leader to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. I also met with five members of the governing and spoke with a representative of the local authority on the phone. The school action plans were evaluated. You took me on a tour of the school and I examined a number of school documents. I checked the school's single central register.

Context

One teacher left the school at the end of October and a new teacher joined after the half-term holiday. The local authority has arranged the appointment of a full-time interim headteacher to lead the school during the spring and summer terms next year.

Main findings

The school has two plans in place, a school improvement plan and the governors' action plan. You have rightly focused on addressing the issues from the previous inspection as quickly as possible and both plans are short term, covering this term only. The plans now need to be extended to plot the intended journey from 'requires improvement' to 'good' or better.

The plans include a range of appropriate actions as well as monitoring activity, dates for completed actions and success criteria. You review the school improvement plan regularly and it is clearly a useful working document. The plans include some dates, deadlines and success criteria but these need to be tightened to ensure that they are as 'smart' as possible.

Although the targets in the school's plans relate to the previous inspection report, the wording of some of the areas for improvement has been changed. This means that the meaning of some targets is subtly different to what was intended.

Governance is now more organised and effective. Members of the governing body have attended training courses on a range of issues, including assessment, safeguarding and effective chairing. Each governor now has a specific role, for example 'literacy governor', and is linked with the member of staff who has responsibility for that area. The governing body's committees have been rearranged and terms of reference written and adopted.

Good relationships have been established between the senior leadership team and the governing body so there is a shared sense of purpose and drive to improve the school. Governing body minutes show that a number of statutory requirements have been addressed, including meeting website requirements, receiving and addressing the health and safety audit and auditing the school's safeguarding practices.

Leaders have now been appointed for all curriculum subjects and phase leaders are now in place, aligned to each key stage. A range of professional development opportunities have been provided for staff, including training provided 'in house' and by local authority advisors. As a result, subjects are now better led and improving. For example, curriculum overviews are now available, action plans have been written for each subject, pupils' work has been scrutinised and staff have been given clear development points to improve teaching in each subject.

A new handwriting scheme has been adopted and this is reflected in the revised handwriting policy. You have given high priority to the presentation of work and neatness of handwriting, for example, through the introduction of a weekly competition for the 'most improved' writer. Copies of the school's handwriting style are displayed throughout the school and staff model this in all displays. The work in pupils' books shows that good progress is being made in improving standards in this area.

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 providing good support and I know that this is something that you value. The school improvement partner's visits are useful and focused and are helping to move the school forward. The local authority has commissioned targeted support from advisors for a number of subject areas (including literacy, numeracy, computing and early years) and you told me that this has been very beneficial, particularly in improving subject leadership and improving staff confidence.

It is important that the local authority continues to monitor the school closely – and continues to provide targeted support – during the transition between headteachers and until a substantive headteacher is appointed and established in post.

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

Yours sincerely

Wendy Varney
Her Majesty's Inspector