

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 9169
Direct email: mathew.mitchell@serco.com



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Maureen Basford
Interim Headteacher
Earith Primary School
School Road
Earith
Huntingdon
PE28 3QB

Dear Mrs Basford

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Earith Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 28 April 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 second monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in March 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 learning activities meet the needs of more able pupils in all classes
- improve the quantity and quality of pupils' work across the full range of subjects particularly in art, design and technology and geography.

Evidence

During the inspection, I met with you, the special needs coordinator and the subject leader for mathematics. I spoke with staff and pupils. I met four governors, including the Chair of the Governing Body. I also met the local authority primary adviser. You joined me on a tour of the school. We observed pupils in all years and looked at their work. I read relevant documentation including pupils' progress data,

your evaluation of the quality of teaching, minutes of governing body meetings and the school's termly operational plan. I also met parents at the end of the day.

Context

The assistant headteacher who was teaching Year 6 left the school in December 2014. A new class teacher joined the school in January 2015. Your role as interim headteacher will end in July 2015 and a new substantive headteacher has been appointed to start in September 2015. A recruitment process is in place to appoint a senior teacher and a class teacher for September 2015.

Main findings

You are responding efficiently and positively to the areas for development identified in the previous inspection and to the first monitoring visit that took place in September 2014. You are determined to improve quickly the outcomes for all groups of pupils. The mathematics subject leader and the special needs coordinator share this determination and are taking the necessary actions to improve achievement in their areas of responsibility. They are improving, in particular, the quality of intervention to support pupils with additional needs and key aspects of mathematics such as calculation and problem solving using new ideas, for example the '*estimation stations*' set up in each classroom.

Teaching assistants are clear about what they need to do and the '*red intervention books*' show clearly the daily small steps pupils make in their progress and understanding. Classrooms are well organised with displays and working walls supporting pupils' learning. You are the subject leader for English and are aware of areas requiring consolidation. Strategies to improve guided reading and extended writing are becoming more effective. The library is being updated and you have plans to enhance this resource further to develop pupils' enthusiasm for reading.

The school's termly operational plan is rightly focused on accelerating pupils' progress and improving the quality of teaching and assessment. This plan, however, requires stronger focus on raising standards for more able pupils because, in some mixed-age classes, teachers' expectations are not high enough. More able pupils enjoy their extended projects, such as the arctic topic and their work on the Second World War. These projects provide good opportunities for all pupils to excel. There is potential to accelerate the progress of high attainers further in lessons and through more demanding homework closely matched to pupils' ability and interest.

The leadership of English and mathematics is sound and you know that you now need to develop the leadership of most other subjects further so that all contribute to the provision of a more vibrant curriculum. At present, evidence of pupils' work in subjects other than English and mathematics, is limited. This is particularly the case in art, design and technology, and geography. Most subject leaders require training in monitoring the quality of planning and teaching in their subject and in tracking the

progress of different groups of pupils more carefully.

The assessment and marking policies are being implemented more consistently. Pupils said that they understand how teachers mark their work and they told me that they *'are doing much harder work now'* and that *'they like all the rewards used in class to make sure they do better'*. The representatives of the School Council are proud of their school. They gave many examples of how regular attendance is encouraged and good behaviour promoted in their school. Your strategies in these areas are effective. You are taking a rigorous approach to challenging pupils' absence through increased contact with families. Attendance is much improved and currently matches the national average. Behaviour in lessons and on the playground is good.

As the interim headteacher you quickly galvanised the staff's commitment and trust. Staff particularly value the advice you provide when evaluating the quality of teaching. They are clear about what they do well and what they need to improve. With the support of the special needs coordinator you are liaising with a range of agencies to support pupils who are on specific learning plans such as a personal education plan (PEP) or an education, health and care plan (EHC). Communication with parents is strong and the parents I met said that changes for the better had been *'massive'* this year. They were overwhelmingly positive about the leadership of the school. They find you and the staff approachable and appreciate your *'hands-on'* style. Some parents, however, are rightly concerned about staff changes although, with the support of the local authority, changes and recruitment for September are being managed well.

Governors acted positively following the local authority review of governance in September 2014. They continue to develop their expertise to provide increased support and challenge to the school. They are aware of the need to refine their skills further and to gather objective evidence of improvements. More work is planned to ensure that visits to the school are better documented, pupil premium spending is checked more precisely and the impact of external support on the quality of provision and teaching is evaluated.

External support

Teachers appreciate the partnership with Cromwell Academy. Staff are learning from others and are beginning to implement new ideas, such as planning a Forest School and learning journals in the early years and developing pupils' profiles across the school. The local authority is maintaining its intensive support through the Local Authority Intervention Group (LAIG) and the recently established Challenge Group. Governors find these groups helpful. The local authority is also identifying resources to mentor the new headteacher from September 2015 and to support governors in evaluating the impact of pupil premium funding.

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

Yours sincerely

Marianick Ellender-Gelé
Her Majesty's Inspector