

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 9166
Direct email: helen.johnson@serco.com



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Mrs Kathleen Mayer
Headteacher
Cherry Tree Hill Primary School
Lime Grove
Chaddesden
Derby
DE21 6WL

Dear Mrs Mayer

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Cherry Tree Hill Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 18 March 2014, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report my 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.

This was the first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement in January 2014. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

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

- ensure that development planning is sharpened, to focus on a small number of whole-school initiatives that will bring about rapid improvement and greater consistency of good practice
- improve the recording and analysis of pupils' progress so that governors, leaders and teachers can more quickly ascertain where progress is not good
- develop more effective ways for children, their parents and staff to understand expectations of good progress for pupils according to their ability and potential

- make more effective use of the evidence gathered during quality assurance activities to shape individual and whole school staff training and development
- establish links with experienced and successful leaders of similar schools, to help identify the activities that will bring about the most rapid improvement.

Evidence

During the visit, I met with you, the deputy headteacher, the Chair of the Governing Body and a group of pupils. I spoke on the telephone with a representative of the local authority. I evaluated the school improvement plan, the school's self-evaluation, systems for recording pupils' progress and evidence of checking on the quality of the school's work. I also toured the school to see learning in progress.

Main findings

Leaders' evaluation of the current performance of the school is inaccurate and not based on a clear assessment of the evidence. Partly because of this, the school's development planning is not sufficiently sharply focused on things that will bring about the most rapid improvement. It was hard to see much that had changed in the school in response to the issues raised at the inspection. Although there is much evidence of effective teaching and some good progress, there is also a great deal of inconsistency. Some teachers and teams have been encouraged to experiment with new ways of marking and assessing work, for example, but there is no effective plan as to how leaders will evaluate it, modify it and, if effective, introduce it across the school.

Systems for monitoring the progress of pupils are now much stronger, and there is regular, moderated assessment and recording. The whole-school analysis of the data produced from this, however, is not being evaluated in a way that enables an accurate judgement on the school's performance. Leaders, governors and teachers cannot quickly use the data to identify pupils who might be able to make better progress or are falling behind. This means that the considerable time invested by teachers and leaders in pupil progress meetings, is not being most effectively used.

The ways that leaders are checking on the quality of teaching and pupils' work have improved. They enable leaders to identify how specific elements of staff practice could be better and there is evidence that this has made a difference to some teachers. However, leaders have not used the data well enough to identify the good practice that could be adopted more quickly across the school as a whole.

Governors are keenly focused on improving the school, but have not sufficiently considered arrangements for strengthening and supporting leaders, such as, for example by linking with another school.

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 has provided an enhanced level of support for the school since the school was inspected in 2012. This means that the school improvement adviser has made more frequent visits. Leaders and governors, however, have received insufficient specific support since January to draw up more urgent and effective proposals for improvement.

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

Yours sincerely

John Peckham
Her Majesty's Inspector