

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: jayne.coleman@serco.com



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Emma Cox
Headteacher
Stratford-upon-Avon Primary School
Broad Street
Stratford-upon-Avon
CV37 6HN

Dear Mrs Cox

Special measures monitoring inspection of Stratford-upon-Avon Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 24 June 2015, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave during the inspection and for the time you made available to discuss the actions which have been taken since the school's recent section 5 inspection.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in March 2015.

Evidence

During this inspection, meetings were held with you and your deputy headteacher, the Chair of the Governing Body and four other governors, and a representative of the local authority. Together, we visited each classroom and I had the opportunity to talk to pupils and staff. The local authority's statement of action and the school's improvement plan were evaluated.

Context

Three teachers have resigned with effect from the end of this term and two of these vacancies have been filled. Recruitment to the final vacancy is currently underway.

The quality of leadership and management at the school

Leaders, including governors, have accepted the findings of the section 5 inspection and have acted quickly on making improvements. You have given all staff a very clear steer on what improvements are needed. So far, there has been a good pace of change.

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Statutory requirements related to the school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils have now been met. All necessary checks have been carried out on staff and volunteers to the school. A coordinated and organised system allows senior leaders and governors to quickly review recruitment procedures and be assured of the rigour of these. The local authority undertook an unannounced review of these aspects on the day before this inspection. Relevant policies are in place, such as a staff behaviour code and one related to whistleblowing. Careful records are now in place on staff training related to child protection. As a result, governors can be assured that key messages and guidance have been given to staff; for example, in relation to most recent government guidance. All staff have been asked to confirm that they have read and understood the school's expectations.

A culture of keeping pupils safe and well is being embedded in all aspects of the school's work. For example, pictures and posters in the corridors and classrooms reinforce that pupils should tell an adult if they are worried about anything. Pupils could talk to me about what they understood of how the school's values of 'Be honest, responsible, safe and respectful' had an increased prominence in their day-to-day experiences of school. Every staff meeting has a focus on safeguarding, and this increased emphasis means that this aspect has a high priority in the thinking of members of staff. For example, a teaching assistant recommended a piece of online training on schools' duty to keep pupils safe from the risk of extremism and radicalisation, which was then completed at a staff meeting. A group of governors are focused on ensuring that they have a good oversight of safeguarding procedures but also wider aspects, such as talking to pupils about how they know how to keep safe when not in school. A senior officer from the local authority's safeguarding team has been working with governors and the headteacher to undertake an audit of all aspects of the school's safeguarding arrangements and work. This is a very helpful approach. However, this audit is still not due to be completed until July 2015. The lack of urgency of this timescale was a criticism of the local authority in the previous inspection report.

You and the deputy headteacher have introduced sharper processes for the monitoring of the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement. These are providing leaders with a clearer picture of strengths in these aspects and what needs to improve, much of which continues to reflect the aspects identified in the previous inspection. Teachers are increasingly following your expectations of how to plan and teach. However, the school's improvement plan does not have enough reference to which specific aspects of teaching need to improve and then how teachers are going to be supported to do this. Leaders have been proactive in beginning to address the issues in the early years, and this includes visits to other schools and acting on feedback from the local authority.

The local authority has completed an extremely robust and thorough review of governance. This included some reference to the spending of the pupil premium funds. The detailed feedback and recommendations give governors an excellent springboard to become highly effective. In the short space of time since the section 5 inspection, governors have increased their understanding of different aspects of the school's work. They are well aware of the need to not be involved in the day-to-day running of the school but rather supporting the strategic direction. Governors' skills, commitment and passion for the school are being channelled in a way that allows them to become much more effective. A detailed review of how leaders spend the pupil premium funds has not taken place. This should be done with urgency to allow leaders to be ready to make any changes from September.

Leaders' plans for improvement are focused on the correct areas, with realistic yet challenging timescales. The plan needs to include more reference to how and when the impact of actions will be checked, and who will do this checking. In addition, the targets for pupils' achievement in different year groups need to be explicitly stated.

The local authority's statement of action is not fit for purpose. There are errors in the document that do not reflect the context of the school. There is limited detail of how the local authority is planning to support leaders in developing a culture of safeguarding. The plan refers to a safeguarding audit and suggests that this will have been completed by May 2015. However, this is not the case. Criteria for success are too vague, such as 'gaps in performance between individuals and groups will be significantly reduced', and therefore it will be difficult for the local authority to sharply monitor progress towards achieving these goals. The local authority has identified that there will be regular reviews of the school's progress. However, the first in-depth review is not planned until October 2015. Senior officers have worked with governors to identify how quick improvements can be made. The support and challenge that has been provided by local authority officers have been welcomed by the headteacher and there is some evidence of impact.

Following the monitoring inspection, the following judgements were made:

The local authority's statement of action is not fit for purpose.

The school's improvement plan is fit for purpose.

The school may appoint newly qualified teachers before the next monitoring inspection. However, we agreed that you would discuss this with me before making any appointment.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Warwickshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

James McNeillie
Her Majesty's Inspector