

Serco Inspections
Boundary House
2 Wythall Green Way
Middle Lane
BIRMINGHAM
West Midlands
B47 6LW

OFSTED

T 0300 123 1231

Text Phone: 0161 6188524

enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

www.ofsted.gov.uk

SERCO

Direct T 0121 683 2888

Direct email tim.orgbourn@serco.com



10 December 2010

Mr Gittins
Headteacher
St John's CofE Primary School
Blakebrook
Kidderminster
DY11 6AP

Dear Mr Gittins

Special measures: monitoring inspection of St John's CofE Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 8 and 9 December 2010, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings.

The inspection was the fourth monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in May 2009. The full list of the areas for improvement which were identified during that inspection are set out in the annex to this letter. The monitoring inspection report is attached and the main judgements are set out below.

Progress since being subject to special measures – satisfactory.

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – good.

This letter and monitoring inspection report will be posted on the Ofsted website. I am copying this letter and the monitoring inspection report to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Governing Body, the Diocesan Director of Education for Worcestershire and the Director of Children's Services for Worcestershire.

Yours sincerely

Ken Buxton
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in May 2009

- Accelerate progress in all subjects to improve standards across the school.
- Improve the quality of teaching by raising teachers' expectations, increasing the pace of learning and the level of challenge for all pupils.
- Improve the quality of leadership, including monitoring and evaluation, at all levels so that there is a clear basis for planning improvements and effective strategies to ensure they are implemented.
- Ensure that the curriculum meets the needs of all pupils and builds effectively on what pupils have done so that progress is accelerated.

Special measures: monitoring of St John's CofE Primary School

Report from the fourth inspection on 8 and 9 December 2010

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, members of staff, the Chair of the Governing Body, a representative from the local authority, a group of parents and carers, and individuals and groups of pupils.

Context

Since the last monitoring visit in July 2010, there have been numerous changes to the school's staff. One teacher has returned following a period of long-term absence. The school has appointed a teacher to replace a member of staff who left at the end of the summer term. Two teachers are retiring at the end of the autumn term and new appointments have been made, for January 2011. During the inspection, two teachers were on maternity leave, three other teachers were absent for health reasons and one teacher was absent because of jury service. To cover for the absent members of staff, one class was being taught by a teacher on a fixed-term contract and the other classes were being taught by supply staff. A school business manager joined the school in September, to take responsibility for finance and the office management.

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning

The school's tracking data shows that pupils have made accelerated progress in reading, writing and mathematics over the autumn term and that they are starting to close the attainment gap that exists with standards nationally. Evidence gathered from lesson observations and the scrutiny of pupils' work confirms this positive outcome. The assessment information provides a clear comparison of how well pupils are performing in each of the parallel classes and highlights where differences exist. The school is using its information to monitor individual pupil's progress to identify those not making enough progress. Staff are acting swiftly to introduce intervention activities for pupils identified as needing to make faster progress. The school's records show that this strategy is having a positive impact as the number of pupils on track this term has increased. The school's monitoring of pupils' progress in science is not as well developed as for English and mathematics. Action to address this is planned for the spring term.

The progress made by pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is now faster than before. This improvement is a result of the school's focused attention on the progress made by individual pupils. However, information about the

progress of other specific groups, such as those known to be eligible for free school meals, is not available in the same detail.

Progress since the last monitoring inspection on the areas for improvement:

- accelerate progress in all subjects to improve standards across the school – satisfactory.

Other relevant pupil outcomes

Pupils enjoy school and talk positively about their learning experiences. Behaviour is good overall although there are a small number of pupils who find the classroom environment difficult and, on a very few occasions, disrupt learning. The school's behavioural procedures work well and the vast majority of pupils respond well to the reward system.

Assemblies make a good contribution to the school's ethos and provide good opportunities to reflect on relevant themes, such as the meaning of friendship. The school's links with the church also support pupils' sense of belonging.

Attendance levels have continued to improve and are now above average. In contrast, the number of pupils who are persistently absent has increased over the same time period.

The effectiveness of provision

Since the last monitoring inspection, the quality of teaching has continued to improve. Pupils are regularly given focused learning opportunities that challenge them appropriately. Teachers have a clearer view about pupils' attainment and they are using the information to plan lessons at an appropriate level. The activities they organise often excite and interest pupils, helping to ensure that they remain on task throughout the lesson. This was particularly noticeable during the most successful lessons, where the pace of learning was good, pupils' behaviour was at its best and they made the most progress. For example, in a Year 6 literacy lesson, the intelligent use of imagery and film clips provided a clever stimulus that caught pupils' imagination. It not only helped them to focus on developing their skills of inference but it inspired them to write a descriptive paragraph that drew on their ability to observe in detail. The focused checklist that pupils used at the end of the lesson provided a structured approach to determine how well their work met the lesson's objectives.

When teachers make their expectations clear and explicit, pupils have a very good understanding of how to deliver the quality of work expected. In a few of the good lessons seen, this high level skill was evident and pupils' work met the standard required. In other lessons, a number of opportunities were missed and pupils were less clear about how to record and improve their work. As a result, the overall

quality and standard of pupils' work was not high enough, which has an adverse impact on the levels pupils attain.

The quality of teachers' marking has also continued to improve and pupils are given clearer feedback, helping them to see what they have done well and where improvement is still needed. As yet, the initiative has not had sufficient time to embed consistently across the school and pupils are not making full use of the comments to improve the presentation and other aspects of their work, such as spelling.

The school's thematic approach to the curriculum has continued to develop successfully, whereby pupils are presented with learning opportunities that relate to topics and specific real-life scenarios. For example, the use of history projects, such as those on the Second World War and on the Egyptians, captured pupils' interests successfully and provided good opportunities for them to apply their literacy and numeracy skills in other contexts. Similarly, the crime scenes set up in both the Year 3 classes provided pupils with a purposeful learning experience as they set out to solve the crime and find the culprit(s) responsible. The curriculum has been enhanced by the addition of new after-school clubs, such as choir and drumming. The parents and carers with whom inspectors met during the inspection reported positively on these recent changes and described how their children talk with enthusiasm about what they are learning at school.

Progress since the last monitoring inspection on the areas for improvement:

- improve the quality of teaching by raising teachers' expectations, increasing the pace of learning and the level of challenge for all pupils – good.
- ensure that the curriculum meets the needs of all pupils and builds effectively on what pupils have done so that progress is accelerated – good.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The implementation of the new staffing structure, at the start of the autumn term, has provided a much needed impetus to the school's development. As a result, there is now a strong and concerted effort to strengthen the school's provision and improve pupils' outcomes. The headteacher has a clear and accurate view about how well the school is performing. He is supported by the newly formed team of phase leaders. Although there is some variation in the quality of support they provide, there is clear evidence that they are taking increased responsibility for monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching and its impact on pupils' progress and attainment. Working with individual members of staff, they have prepared detailed action plans to improve the quality of teaching and learning. The English and mathematics subject leaders are making a significant contribution to the school's development. Their analysis of data has identified where subject-specific improvement is needed, and action has been taken to address this. For example, the mathematics subject leader, working with staff, has developed and introduced a

calculation policy that is already helping to ensure a consistent approach to teaching mathematical operations across the school. Work in these two curriculum areas is moving apace, whereas developments in science have stalled.

Morale is good and there is a positive ethos within the school. The parents and carers with whom inspectors met during the inspection talked positively about the changes taking place. They described the school's presentation to parents, which explained how pupils' progress is monitored, to be particularly useful. They are also complimentary about the willingness of the school's senior leaders to listen and act upon parental feedback.

The work of the governing body is focused and adding to the school's developing sense of optimism for the future. The quality of information they receive via the headteacher's reports is detailed and analytical. Increasingly ambitious targets are being set for the school to achieve. For example, having celebrated the recent improvement in pupils' attendance, higher targets are being discussed for the school to achieve. Members of the governing body are taking on specific responsibilities as a strategy to monitor developments taking place. Action has been taken to ensure that safeguarding issues have been resolved successfully. The governing body has fulfilled its statutory responsibility to publish the school's profile.

Progress since the last monitoring inspection on the areas for improvement:

- improve the quality of leadership, including monitoring and evaluation, at all levels so that there is a clear basis for planning improvements and effective strategies to ensure they are implemented – good.

External support

The local authority has started to withdraw the intensive level of support previously provided to the school. This development is in recognition of the school's growing confidence and capacity to improve. The authority's recent report is of a high standard and provides comprehensive information about the school's development. The judgements provide a clear indication of how the authority's efforts have had a positive impact on the school and helped it to 'turn the corner'.