

Serco Inspections
Cedar House
21 William Street
Edgbaston
Birmingham
B15 1LH

OFSTED
T 0300 123 1231
Text Phone: 0161 6188524
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk

SERCO
Direct T 0121 683 3888



27 January 2011

Mrs Kathy Weston
St James' CofE Primary School
Vicarage Road
Hereford
HR1 2QN

Dear Mrs Weston

Special measures: monitoring inspection of St James' CofE Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 25 and 26 January 2011, 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 second monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in March 2010. 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 – satisfactory

I am copying this letter and the monitoring inspection report to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Herefordshire and the Diocesan Director of Education for Hereford.

Yours sincerely

Mark Mumby
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in March 2010

- Increase attainment and rates of progress, especially in writing and mathematics by:
 - improving the quality of teaching and learning across the school
 - ensuring better use of assessment information to challenge and support all pupils to do their best
 - developing more effective systems for tracking pupils' progress in order that underperformance can be more quickly identified and remedied
 - improving the quality of written feedback to pupils so that they are clearer about what they need to do to improve their work.

- Improve the quality and rigour of monitoring and evaluation procedures in order to develop clear plans for realistic and measurable improvement.

- Address the issue of inadequate outdoor provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage by September 2010.

Special measures: monitoring of St James' CofE Primary School

Report from the second monitoring inspection on 25 and 26 January 2011

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, Reception class teacher, members of the governing body and an officer from the local authority.

Context

Since the first monitoring visit, leadership and management responsibilities have been reorganised. The headteacher has taken over responsibility for the leadership of Key Stage 2 and assessment. One of the teachers in Key Stage 2 is on long-term sick leave and the class is currently being taught by a supply teacher.

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

Since the first monitoring visit, the school has assessed the progress made by pupils during the autumn term 2010. These data indicate that, although the majority of pupils are beginning to make accelerated progress, approximately a third of pupils have made insufficient progress to be recorded on the school's assessments. The progress made by pupils in Year 3 is slower than that made by pupils in other year groups. School data indicate that attainment in all year groups remains below expectations for the pupils' ages, especially in writing and mathematics. Again, the greatest level of below expected attainment is in Year 3.

The progress made by the pupils in writing and mathematics in over a third of the lessons observed on this monitoring visit was inadequate and in no lesson was progress for the majority of pupils better than satisfactory. Progress in pupils' writing books indicates that the majority of pupils are now making satisfactory progress over time. However, this rate of progress is not rapid enough to enable pupils to fill the gaps in their learning from previous underachievement. The presentation of pupils' work has improved, but remains inconsistent. It is particularly weak in Years 2 and 3.

Progress since the last inspection on the areas for improvement:

- Increase attainment and rates of progress, especially in writing and mathematics – inadequate.

Other relevant pupil outcomes

Pupils' behaviour and attitudes in lessons have improved. However, pupils continue to become restless on occasions when teachers' expectations are too low or activities are not suitably planned to engage and challenge all learners.

The effectiveness of provision

Teaching has not improved significantly since the first monitoring visit. Teachers have responded to professional development by implementing strategies, such as improving the clarity of learning objectives. However, the impact on the quality of teaching has been too small. There is still too much teaching that is not good enough to enable pupils to make the progress they need to in order to catch up in their learning. This is mainly because teachers do not use assessment well enough to plan learning activities which match the pupils' individual needs. On occasions pupils are given tasks to complete which are too difficult because they do not have sufficient prior knowledge on which to build. On other occasions, tasks are too simple and teachers miss opportunities to challenge pupils fully. Teachers do not make sufficiently high expectations of the quality and quantity of work which pupils should achieve clear to them. Teachers do not assess pupils' learning well enough during lessons to monitor progress and extend pupils' learning. For example, they do not question pupils enough or draw on the pupils' ideas sufficiently. Teaching assistants are skilled and, most of the time, they provide good support for pupils through suitably challenging questioning when working with individuals and small groups. However, during whole-class teaching, their time is frequently not used effectively.

The school's work to improve the effectiveness of marking has been successful throughout all year groups. Marking is now being used effectively to promote satisfactory progress for many pupils throughout the school. The most helpful marking was seen in pupils' writing books in Years 1, 2 and 5. In Years 1 and 5, pupils benefit most because of the careful way in which they respond to this guidance. Consequently, they make increased progress in their learning.

Effective action has been put in place to improve provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage. As a result, planning has improved and children are now being given suitable opportunities for learning and development. Although the improved outdoor area has enhanced the opportunities for the children, it is still not being used to its potential to provide a good range of stimulating learning and development opportunities. The adults in Reception contribute to the children's learning and development through skilled questioning and discussion with them.

Progress since the last inspection on the areas for improvement:

- Address the issue of inadequate outdoor provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage by September 2010 – good.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The school has made improvements to its raising achievement plan. This document includes appropriate objectives and actions. There are suitable success criteria and

milestones which the school can use to measure progress. This development should enable the governing body to fulfil its duties more effectively. The governing body, although still having vacancies, has been strengthened. Newly appointed governors with relevant expertise and motivation have quickly gained a good understanding of the issues facing the school. Clear guidance from the local authority and the headteacher has been effective in enabling the governing body to hold the school to account for its work and drive forward improvement in a supportive way. An effective committee structure has been established and governors' involvement in school has increased. Minutes of governing body meetings indicate that appropriate questions are now being asked about pupils' learning and how progress against milestones in the raising achievement plan can be evaluated.

Class teachers have prepared raising achievement plans for their own classes. This strategy is already proving to be successful. For example, improvements to planning and the work of teaching assistants in the Early Years Foundation Stage have improved as a result. There has been appropriate support from the local authority in evaluating this work.

The school has improved the quality of feedback teachers receive following lesson observations. They now receive development points and targets. However, the development points focus too much on aspects of provision rather than pupils' learning. There is insufficient emphasis on the key weaknesses in assessment and lesson planning identified on this monitoring visit. Other monitoring and evaluation activities, such as scrutiny of teachers' lesson planning are recorded well, with development points being followed up on subsequent activities.

The school's new tracking system is becoming embedded and the school is now able to demonstrate the progress pupils make over a term. However, the school acknowledges that teachers' skills in assessing pupils' learning are not developed well enough in order for these data to become consistently robust. The assessment data are being used well to target support for individual pupils.

Progress since the last inspection on the areas for improvement:

- Improve the quality and rigour of monitoring and evaluation procedures in order to develop clear plans for realistic and measurable improvement – satisfactory.

External support

The local authority has provided extensive support to improve lesson planning and teacher assessment. Along with a visit to another school for the Reception class teacher, this support has had a positive impact on the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Work to improve the quality of teaching in the remainder of the school has been of limited effect. The support provided for the governing body has contributed to its improved effectiveness in holding the school to account for its work.