

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](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

**Serco**  
**Direct T** 0121 683 3888



11 March 2011

Mrs K Clough  
Headteacher  
Syresham St James CofE Primary School  
High Street  
Syresham  
Brackley  
NN13 5HL

Dear Mrs Clough

**Special measures: monitoring inspection of Syresham St James CofE Primary School**

Following my visit to your school on 9 March 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 May 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 – good.

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – good.

Newly qualified teachers should not be appointed without the prior permission of Ofsted.

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 diocese and the Director of Children's Services for Northamptonshire.

Yours sincerely

Michael Sheridan  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## Annex

### **The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in May 2010**

- Accelerate pupils' progress in writing and mathematics so that they reach levels of attainment that are consistently well above average by:
  - ensuring that pupils have clear relevant targets and are kept well informed about how they are doing and how they can improve
  - improving and extending systems to accurately assess and track pupils' progress
  - providing more opportunities for pupils to practise and extend their literacy and numeracy skills across the curriculum.
  
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning by:
  - using time more purposefully and productively in lessons
  - raising expectations of what pupils can achieve
  - making effective use of information about what pupils already know and are able to do to inform lesson planning
  - planning lessons that challenge pupils of all abilities to build on and extend their knowledge and skills
  - putting more emphasis on what the pupils will learn rather than do in lessons
  - deploying teaching assistants more effectively to support learning.
  
- Improve leadership and management by:
  - ensuring that all aspects of monitoring and evaluation are rigorous and sharply focused on outcomes for pupils
  - establishing high expectations and aspirations in all areas of school life, including behaviour
  - empowering subject leaders to drive improvements
  - providing the governing body with an accurate picture of the school's performance, so that it can hold the school to account and shape the school's future direction.

## **Special measures: monitoring of Syresham St James CofE Primary School**

### **Report from the second monitoring inspection on 9 March 2011**

#### **Evidence**

The inspector observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, middle leaders, groups of pupils, members of the governing body, representatives from the local authority and a representative from the diocese. The inspector also talked with some parents and carers as they brought their children to school.

#### **Context**

The senior teacher is currently away from school. His teaching commitment is being covered by a seconded advisory teacher and a teacher who is returning from maternity leave. A further teacher has started a phased return following a period of absence. This teacher was supporting groups of pupils during this visit. A part-time teacher who, at the time of the last visit, was covering full time has now returned to part-time teaching, and a temporary teacher is in place for the duration of the returning teacher's phased return. The headteacher responsibility is now held by one person. The role of English subject leader has been taken on by a teacher who is being supported in developing this role by the headteacher.

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

Pupils' achievement continues to improve. Achievement is most clearly seen in the increasing number of lessons where pupils enjoy interesting topics and activities which are motivating and give a practical purpose to learning. As progress through the school improves, pupils are in an increasingly strong position to reach higher standards of attainment in the future. Pupils' progress is now supported by the collection of more accurate data. This data is being used increasingly well to identify gaps in learning and provide pupils with targeted intervention that is beginning to have an impact. Pupils in Year 6 remain on target to reach broadly average standards. A range of interventions and extra classes are in place to support these pupils. The school now needs to maintain a close watch on these interventions so leaders can be certain it is being successful quickly enough in preparation for the end-of-key-stage assessments.

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

- accelerate pupils' progress in writing and mathematics so that they reach levels of attainment that are consistently well above average – satisfactory.

## **Other relevant pupil outcomes**

Behaviour around school and in classes is now generally good. In the lessons where teaching is less motivating, some pupils appear a little bored but still work with determination on the tasks they are given. Expectations are high and pupils have risen to them. Behaviour is no longer a concern.

## **The effectiveness of provision**

The quality of teaching continues to improve. Leaders have recognised that new and returning teachers need to quickly get up to speed with the changes and developments that have taken place. Teaching was observed throughout the school. No inadequate teaching was seen and the proportion of good teaching has increased. Cross-curricular links are developing with increasing numbers of teachers finding useful ways to teach literacy and, to a lesser extent, numeracy through different subjects. In the class where this is most successful, pupils develop their writing skills in literacy and then go on to practise these skills in other subjects. This approach, along with the good quality guidance these pupils receive, is leading to accelerated progress.

Marking continues to improve although the impact of this remains variable. In some classes, marking is of a high quality with increasingly good quality advice being given to pupils. In these classes, pupils are expected to respond to the marking so that they improve their work. However, some marking remains ineffective with some offering little useful advice to pupils on how to improve their work.

Most adult support in class is working well, with additional adults guiding pupils effectively because they have been given appropriate instructions from the teacher. However, in some lessons it was clear that the same quality guidance had not been shared. In these lessons, teaching assistants look somewhat lost at times and take too much time working out the purpose of the lesson before they can offer any meaningful support to pupils.

Many pupils say that they enjoy their learning and the inspector witnessed this in a higher proportion of lessons than previously. Some pupils in Year 5 and 6 say that they do not enjoy their learning as much as they used to. Pupils were able to tell inspectors what their targets were, but few really understood what these meant and how they could work to improve these areas.

Despite these remaining areas of inconsistency, the good improvement seen in teaching overall is significant in this school's improvement to date.

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

- improve the quality of teaching and learning – good.

## **The effectiveness of leadership and management**

Leaders are becoming much more focused on determining priorities that are based on their increasingly accurate evaluation of pupil outcomes. The headteacher appropriately took responsibility for leading literacy in the short term and now another member of staff is quickly developing her understanding of what is expected as she takes over the role. The collection of data about how well pupils are doing is becoming much more robust. The local authority has supported the school in improving the accuracy and usefulness of the information collected. Leaders and teachers now have a much clearer understanding of strengths and areas for development for individuals and year groups in different subjects. The school is using this information to better inform interventions for individuals who have fallen behind and for whole-school improvement. An emerging strength in leadership is the way that subject leaders and the headteacher work together in order to learn from each other and support school-wide development. This has led to the practice in literacy leadership catching up with that in numeracy. Leaders are becoming more confident and less reliant on external support. New links with other similar schools have given leaders a clear understanding of what can be achieved and what they already do well.

The governing body continues to work hard to support the school in moving forward and ensures that its actions are in the best interests of the school and its continuing improvement. It has a very clear view of the school's strengths and vulnerabilities. The Chair of the Governing Body demonstrates a steadfast determination to steer the school to a more sustainable and successful footing. The governing body has worked hard to keep parents and carers informed about the school's improvement journey but has not always been able to satisfy parental requests for information because of the confidential nature of some aspects that concern parents and carers. This is most notable in the case of long-term staff arrangements in some classes. The inspector found that the governing body and senior staff are working appropriately to ensure the long-term stability of progress throughout the school and that, to date, the governing body has shared as much information as it can. The quality of governance is no longer a concern.

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

- improve leadership and management – good.

## **External support**

The local authority has effectively provided the additional support requested at the last monitoring visit. The links brokered with other schools have been well received and important in broadening the experiences and horizons of leaders at all levels. Local authority advisers have provided useful moderation of teachers' assessments. The process of assessment and tracking is more organised and useful as a result of

their involvement. The diocese continues to provide useful support and guidance to the governing body and pastoral support to members of staff.

### **Priorities for further improvement**

- Provide opportunities for middle leaders to share and develop the emerging good practice in school.
- Consider how target setting can be used effectively so that pupils understand their targets and the guidance they receive helps them meet these learning targets in a timely manner.