

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

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



23 September 2010

Mrs Deb Foster
St Matthew's CofE Primary School
Windmill Lane
Smethwick
B66 3LX

Dear Mrs Foster

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on Wednesday 22 September 2010, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information you provided before and during my visit. Please pass on my thanks to the chair of the governing body, who made himself available at short notice, and also pupils and those teachers observed during lessons, as well as the parents who were available to speak to me. The central record of suitability checks on staff was scrutinised during this inspection and it fully meets the current government requirements.

There have been significant staff changes since the school's last inspection as well as improvements to the school building and outdoor areas for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

As a result of the inspection on 4 February 2009, the school was asked to raise standards and improve pupils' progress, especially in English and mathematics; improve resources in the Early Years Foundation Stage so that the children can benefit fully from outdoor learning experiences; inform pupils better about their targets so that they can take more responsibility for their own learning; and increase accountability by ensuring that middle leaders take full responsibility for standards and improvements.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time the school has made good progress in making improvements and good progress in demonstrating a better capacity for sustained improvement.

Strong and determined leadership has driven improvements to the school. There are well established and robust assessments of pupils' progress, combined with the systematic monitoring of lessons and pupils' work, which have improved the quality and consistency of the teaching. This is raising attainment and improving achievement right across the school. The results of the most recent national



assessments for Year 6 pupils in 2010 show a significant rise in attainment in English, mathematics and science compared with the previous year, reflecting sustained improvement to standards. This is also evident in teachers' assessments in the Early Years Foundation Stage and in Years 1 and 2. Although attainment remains below average by the end of Years 2 and 6, pupils are making good progress and standards are edging closer towards those expected nationally by the end of Year 6. This marks a significant turning point reflecting the high expectations of the staff, leadership team and governing body.

Improved resources in the Early Years Foundation Stage are enabling children in both the Nursery and Reception class to experience stimulating and exciting indoor and outdoor activities. Profiles of the children's performance point to accelerated progress in many areas of learning, particularly in language, communication and problem solving. This is giving the children firm foundations in reading, writing and mathematics when they join Year 1.

In all classes, pupils are much more involved in assessing and reflecting on their own and others' learning, as well checking their next steps towards challenging targets. The headteacher and deputy headteacher have reorganised middle leaders' responsibilities resulting in sharper and more focused interventions if pupils fall behind. Consequently, teachers and phase leaders (those in charge of each key stage) have greater responsibility for pupils' performance and are skilled at using assessment to adapt their teaching to pupils' needs. Regular pupil progress meetings enable staff to devise programmes and interventions that support those who are most at risk of underachieving. The governing body is better informed to challenge and question pupils' and teachers' performance with phase leaders during joint monitoring visits. Learning support practitioners provide very effective support for pupils who find learning difficult, including specialised reading support and mathematics booster work. There is still more to do to improve the progress of able pupils through better questioning in lessons to extend and deepen their understanding.

The local authority, through its deployment and reports from the school improvement partner, has provided good support. Regular visits combined with systematic reviews undertaken jointly with members of the senior leadership team, have helped to keep the school on a consistent course of improvement. This has also helped to increase the school's capacity for sustained improvement as phase leaders are taking increasing responsibility for evaluating the school's performance

I hope that you have found the visit helpful in promoting improvement in your school. This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Charalambos Loizou
Her Majesty's Inspector

