

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



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Mrs R Pugh
Headteacher
Onny CofE (A) Primary School
Onibury
Craven Arms
Shropshire
SY7 9AW

Dear Mrs Pugh

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools: monitoring inspection of Onny CofE (A) Primary School

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 14 July 2011, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during the inspection. Please pass on my thanks to the members of the governing body for their involvement in the inspection and, most importantly, the pupils for their positive engagement.

Since the previous inspection, a new headteacher joined the school in April 2011 following the previous postholder's retirement. The local authority has carried out a review of its primary school provision and, as a result, the school had faced closure. Following concerted action by those associated with the school, the authority has decided to keep it open. The school is now in the process of working to federate with another local primary school.

As a result of the inspection on 21 January 2010, the school was asked to address the most important areas for improvement which are set out in the annex to this letter.

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

The school has experienced a turbulent period as its future has been in the balance. The school's leaders have invested a considerable amount of time, effort and energy in putting together a strategy to convince the authority of the school's viability. As a consequence, many of the changes implemented to address the previous inspection recommendations are relatively recent. However, under the guidance and leadership



of the new headteacher, there is a strong sense of purpose and a renewed optimism that look forward to the next stage of the school's future.

Pupils are very positive about school. They speak in glowing terms about how they enjoy learning and how their teachers make lessons fun. By the end of Year 6, when pupils leave, their attainment is satisfactory and they have developed the knowledge, skills and understanding needed to access the secondary curriculum. Pupils' attainment in most other year groups is broadly in line with the national average, but the rate at which pupils make progress in different subjects varies across the school.

Teachers are working together well to implement changes to the curriculum and increase opportunities for practical learning into lessons. For instance, a class of older pupils enjoyed the challenge of identifying the characteristics of different triangles and grouping them accurately using a Venn diagram. Similarly, a class of younger pupils were excited to learn about electricity by building simple circuits. Teachers plan carefully for pupils working in mixed-age classes to ensure work is matched to pupils' differing abilities. In the best lessons, pupils are given very clear guidance about the standards expected. For example, the Reception children were set the challenge of writing a sentence describing what they enjoyed doing on the beach. As part of the exercise, they were given a short checklist so that they could self-assess whether or not they had achieved the lesson's success criteria. This strategy worked very effectively to encourage the children to take responsibility for their own learning.

The very recently developed tracking system is helping to show pupils' attainment and progress. Teachers are planning work based on their knowledge of pupils' prior learning. Those pupils identified as not making sufficient progress are being provided with individual support, so as to increase their rate of learning. As yet, these recent developments have not had sufficient time to show evidence of accelerating pupils' progress.

Pupils have a clear understanding about the levels at which they are working. Teachers take care to inform pupils about how their work can be strengthened and improved. There is evidence to show that some pupils take notice of and act upon the advice.

The actions taken to improve pupils' attendance have made a positive difference. The school's administrator monitors attendance closely and uses text messaging to keep in contact with families. As a direct result, attendance levels have increased and now match the national average.

The arrival of the newly appointed headteacher has brought a sense of urgency to tackle the areas needing improvement. Staff and the governing body are motivated to work together to strengthen the school. The headteacher has been proactive in accessing support from the local authority, which has helped to focus on the issues to be tackled. The strategy to federate with a local primary school has shown

potential for future collaborative work. This is particularly evident from the work recently carried out by the two schools in writing a joint draft school improvement plan. The school's plan has yet to be fully discussed by the governing body to agree priorities and allocate resources. The plan does not refer to the current areas for improvement identified by Ofsted for Onny, nor does it identify the key academic issues that need improvement. Similarly, the current success criteria are not precise enough to use as measures to determine what success has been achieved.

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

Yours sincerely

Ken Buxton
Her Majesty's Inspector

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

- Improve the quality of teaching to secure good progress by:
 - matching work closely to pupils' needs and abilities so that they are challenged well throughout lessons
 - making better use of progress data in writing and mathematics to plan effective work that will accelerate pupils' learning at Key Stage 2.

- Work closely with parents to raise the attendance rate of those pupils who miss too much school, to secure their better progress.

- Ensure pupils, especially the older ones, are well informed about the levels they are expected to attain by the end of the year and the level at which they are working so that they can take more responsibility for their own progress.

- Sharpen school improvement by:
 - prioritising plans so that the most important are allocated sufficient resources
 - ensuring that leaders use challenging targets rigorously to check the success of plans and to identify where further improvements can be made.