

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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Mr S Miles
Headteacher
West Hill Primary School
High Mount Street
Hednesford
Cannock
WS12 4BH

Dear Mr Miles

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools: monitoring inspection of West Hill Primary School

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 8 December 2011, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during the inspection.

A deputy headteacher has been appointed since the last inspection when the post was vacant. Key Stage 1 classes have been affected by long-term staff absence.

As a result of the inspection on 10 May 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 good progress in making improvements and good progress in demonstrating a better capacity for sustained improvement.

The previous inspection identified that attainment on entry into the Early Years Foundation Stage was below average. Pupils have weaker reading and writing skills when they join the school than is seen nationally. Attainment by the end of Key Stage 1 is broadly average but, in writing, and particularly for boys, it has been below average for the last two years. Assessments of the current Year 2 class show that pupils are now on track to reach the national average for writing in 2012. Older pupils make better progress so that, by the time they complete the Key Stage 2 tests, their overall attainment is above average and notably so in mathematics. Girls outperform boys, although boys' attainment is still just above the national average for all boys of this age. The school's tracking system is predicting that above average attainment will be at least sustained in the 2012 tests if not improved upon further. Pupils make good progress during Key Stage 2 and higher attaining pupils make outstanding progress in mathematics. Achievement at the school is now good.

September 2010



Achievement has been raised from satisfactory to good through a combination of new strategies targeted at improving specific areas of weakness and through better quality teaching and learning. Recognising that achievement in English lags behind the better outcomes in mathematics, the school has invested considerable effort in improving pupils' reading and writing. The successful promotion of reading has been made a performance management target for all teachers. Opportunities for pupils to engage in extended writing tasks are timetabled, as are themed days where pupils focus on developing specific aspects of their reading and writing. Simple but effective strategies, such as switching pupils' exercise books from A5 to the larger A4 format, encourage pupils to write more. Authors and other adults visit the school to read aloud to pupils and to share their love of reading. Pupils have the opportunity to read online books at lunchtime and are tested by the software on their comprehension of what they have read. They can access the same online material from home and many choose to do so. The school has been aided in this by satisfactory support from local authority advisers, and the local authority has also helped the school to improve its provision for scientific enquiry. There are now more opportunities for pupils to develop their understanding of scientific method and the school is seeking to validate this by applying for a national quality mark.

The quality of teaching seen during the inspection was all at least good and some was outstanding. Lessons are well planned and capably executed so that learning proceeds at a fast pace. Assessment information is used well to plan activities of appropriate challenge for pupils' different starting points and to ensure pupils are clear about what they are aiming to achieve. Pupils' good behaviour makes an important contribution to facilitating good learning. Pupils work well independently and in small groups and they clearly enjoy the many opportunities they have for creative and collaborative learning. For instance, the steel pan band, 'Girls Too Loud' rehearses regularly and gives accomplished musical performances in the local community. The school rewards good attendance through a range of incentives and follows up any instances of poor individual attendance rigorously with parents and carers. Consequently, attendance has improved from being average at the time of the last inspection to being above average now.

At the time of the last inspection, the post of deputy headteacher was vacant and other senior leaders were trying to cover the role between them. They recognise that the arrangements then lacked clarity and that the leadership team was in a state of transition. However, following the appointment of a deputy headteacher a year ago, the headteacher has been able to clearly define roles and appropriately to delegate some leadership functions to others. Within clearly understood limits, senior leaders now have autonomy and the authority to act in improving the aspects on which they lead. Senior leaders are highly positive about the ways in which the leadership and management of the school have developed. They say that, previously, the headteacher closely directed their work whereas now they identify issues they pick up from monitoring, for instance, and bring those and the actions



they propose to take to the headteacher for approval. Quality assurance processes are extremely rigorous and are having a major impact on the consistency of practice across the school's work.

The school is rapidly improving many aspects of its provision and outcomes. Attendance is now above average and achievement has improved from satisfactory to good. The quality of teaching seen during the inspection was good, which is in line with the findings of the school's quality assurance process. There is a new clarity and sense of empowerment amongst senior leaders which is driving the improvements. The school has a good capacity to continue to improve.

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

David Anstead
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Raise standards in core subjects with a particular focus on:
 - developing skills in English, particularly of boys, by providing opportunities for extended writing
 - improving scientific enquiry skills.

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning from satisfactory to good by ensuring that:
 - tasks are always accurately matched to pupils' learning needs
 - the pace of learning is sufficiently brisk and teachers do not talk for too long
 - questioning is used effectively to probe pupils' understanding and so extend their learning.

- Develop the role of the senior leadership team and subject leaders so that they play a bigger part in school improvement.