

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 B Williams-Cooke
Headteacher
St Margaret's CofE Junior School
Coppice Road
Whitnash
Leamington Spa
CV31 2JF

Dear Mrs Williams-Cooke

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools: monitoring inspection of St Margaret's CofE Junior School

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 13 December 2011, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during the inspection. Please pass my thanks to the pupils who spoke to me for their perceptive views that influenced the conclusions reached.

Since the school was inspected, a new headteacher took up post in September of this year.

As a result of the inspection on 7–8 July 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.

During the visit, evidence of improved progress was apparent although this was not fully reflected in the 2011 results at the end of Year 6. More recently, there is evidence of better progress so attainment is rising across the school. The gap in attainment between writing and other aspects is narrowing. The school is more accurately assessing pupils and is more effectively using this information to hold teachers to account and to identify the specific interventions needed to ensure pupils make good progress. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities have benefitted because of the school's decision to concentrate support on those with the greatest need.

September 2010



As a result of the effective partnership the school has developed with its feeder infant school, the progress being made by pupils in Year 3 has increased sharply. In the lessons seen, the strongest progress was in Year 5 because teachers effectively challenged all pupils. In many of the lessons observed elsewhere, more-able pupils made less progress than other groups because rather too much time was devoted to the consolidation of skills that had been previously introduced. Pupils' writing is improving because the school is more effectively using the subjects of the curriculum to promote opportunities for writing and greater attention is given to their literacy targets in all lessons.

The school has taken effective steps to improve behaviour so that this very rarely interferes with learning. Pupils spoke very positively about the new behaviour and reward policy. They describe its fairness in recognising the contributions they make.

Teaching is improving, largely because more effective practice is being more consistently adopted. Planning consistently identifies the required learning and identifies the steps that must be taken to achieve the intended outcome. Often pupils are actively involved in identifying these steps. Teachers avoid overly long introductions, preferring instead to pause lessons to praise pupils for their efforts and to clarify the required learning. Teachers are becoming more skilled at using questions to ensure all pupils are more engaged in their learning. Highly effective questioning was observed in a Year 5 lesson on multiplication. The teacher ensured a high pace through the use of questions targeted at different ability pupils and by strictly enforcing time limits. Talk partners were used so pupils received additional support in responding to the more challenging questions. In addition, strategies were adopted to ensure all pupils had to think about their responses.

The routine requirement, that pupils consider their literacy targets when writing, is improving outcomes in this area and is also promoting independent learning. Teachers were observed to be making a range of adaptations to enable all pupils to write more effectively. For instance, in a Year 3 lesson, all pupils were able to write instructions about how to make a Christmas cracker because well-considered prompts were made available according to pupils' needs. The increasing opportunities pupils have for self- and peer-assessment are a positive development. Teachers are providing more detailed feedback so pupils know their targets. However, pupils are not always clear about what they must do to improve, in part because relatively few links are made to National Curriculum levels. At times, particularly in mathematics, pupils devote too much time to tasks they find relatively straightforward. For instance, they do not have sufficient opportunity to omit questions they find easy, in order to concentrate on more challenging work.

The curriculum is being used more effectively to promote pupils' communication skills. For instance, in Year 6, pupils have been inspired to write about the differences in how people lived in the Second World War compared to the present day. In addition, pupils were seen enthusiastically undertaking mathematical investigations that involved comparing the imperial measures used at the time of the Blitz to present-day metric units. The school has done well in ensuring that high levels of enjoyment have been maintained whilst giving greater attention to writing in all subjects.

Since the last inspection, leaders have ensured that their monitoring has had a more consistent impact on the school. As a result, strengths were observed in all the teaching seen, and the approaches taken are more consistent across the school. Partnerships are having a greater impact, particularly in terms of ensuring much greater continuity with what happens when pupils transfer from the infants. The school's self-review is largely accurate. The headteacher is involving others more in bringing about improvement. The governing body is more involved in monitoring the work of the school and has identified more challenging targets to be used to evaluate the effectiveness of senior leaders. Year leaders are playing a key role in ensuring that more effective practice is established across the school. These colleagues have ensured a more rigorous approach to teacher assessment. This has improved the effectiveness of the tracking of pupil progress and has contributed to an increased understanding of progression in learning, particularly related to writing.

The governing body valued the support it received from the local authority and the diocese in appointing a new headteacher. The School Improvement Officer has been effective in supporting more effective partnership working with the infant school and in her role reviewing improvement planning.

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

Kevin Sheldrick
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Raise pupils' attainment in writing by ensuring that:
 - pupils have regular opportunities to write at length
 - pupils are given detailed feedback on what they have written well and their next steps to improve their writing
 - opportunities are carefully planned within the curriculum so that pupils can practise their skills and different styles of writing across all subjects.

- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
 - developing the skills at all levels for accurate and thorough self-evaluation to ensure that actions taken bring about improvement and have a consistently strong impact in all areas
 - identifying and sharing good practice within the school.

- Ensuring consistency in the quality of teaching and the use of assessment by making sure that teachers use assessment information to plan activities in lessons which meet the needs of abilities within each class.