

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 E tim.ogbourn@serco.com
Direct T 0121 683 3888



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Mr J Fowler
Headteacher
Holywell Primary School
Tolpits Lane
Watford
WD18 6LL

Dear Mr Fowler

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools: monitoring inspection of Holywell Primary School

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 14 December 2011, for the time you gave to our telephone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during the inspection. Please give my thanks to the Chair of the Governing Body for finding time to attend the feedback.

A new coordinator for the Early Years Foundation Stage was appointed at the beginning of the academic year; three new teachers were appointed at the same time. Since the last inspection, there have been significant changes in the teaching staff. The school is growing in size, with 55 new pupils on roll since the beginning of the academic year. It is scheduled to become a three-form-entry primary school in September 2012.

As a result of the inspection on 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.

The results of the 2011 Key Stage 1 teacher assessments and Key Stage 2 national tests were significantly below the national averages. The proportion of pupils making the expected progress Key Stage 1 to 2 was well below average in mathematics but broadly in line with expectations in English. An analysis of data provided by the school compared with a brief scrutiny of the pupils' work indicates that pupils continue to struggle with mathematical vocabulary and questions expressed as sentences ('word problems').



The school has developed a robust assessment database, and early indications since the beginning of the school year suggest that most pupils' progress is broadly in line with age-related expectations. In lessons, most pupils make appropriate progress and some are now making good progress, albeit from a low baseline. Improvements in teaching are making a difference, although there is a considerable amount of work to do if the gaps in the pupils' prior learning are to be addressed.

HMI visited five lessons or parts of lessons in a programme of joint observations with senior staff. Teaching and learning were found to be satisfactory, and some good teaching was evident. Learning was most effective when clear guidance was provided on what the pupils were expected to learn, the tasks were planned to provide a continuity of concept and challenge, and time was managed appropriately. Satisfactory lessons could have been more effective if the level of challenge had been developed incrementally or the use of time had been more carefully managed to enable the class teacher to provide an effective plenary. Learning support staff often worked effectively leading small groups. However, there were times during lesson introductions that lasted too long, when they were not deployed to best advantage.

Early Years Foundation Stage provision has been reorganised into a new base and an experienced coordinator has joined the team. Greater use needs to be made of the small learning opportunities the daily routine presents to enhance the children's literacy and numeracy skills. During this inspection, some useful phonics sessions helped children with their letter shapes and sounds but not enough time was given to this key element of learning.

Attendance is rising. It is close to the average for primary schools, although a small number of persistent absentees remain. Safeguarding arrangements are in line with current requirements.

Senior staff have developed a programme to monitor pupil progress and relate this to the quality of provision. The headteacher and deputy headteacher joined HMI in monitoring the quality of teaching and learning and the evaluations they offered matched the judgements given by HMI. Although much has been done to improve provision and raise standards, the school's 2012 targets remain close to the floor targets set by government as the minimum level of acceptable performance for primary schools.

Effective local authority support has helped to improve teaching and to sharpen the focus on school improvement. Significant new resources are being provided to support the expansion of the school.

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 Jones
Her Majesty's Inspector



Annex

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

- Raise standards further in each year group and particularly in mathematics and science by:
 - increasing the proportion of pupils reaching and exceeding the level expected for their age in all year groups
 - accelerating pupils' progress in mathematics and science, particularly in Years 3, 4, 5, and 6
 - sustaining and embedding the recent rise in attainment levels in English for all groups of pupils.

- Increase the proportion of pupils making good or better progress by:
 - ensuring tasks effectively match the learning intentions for each lesson
 - providing clear guidance to pupils on what they need to do next to improve
 - extending and making best use of the most effective teaching in school.

- Strengthen the school's capacity to embed and sustain improvement by:
 - developing the role of curriculum leadership to cover all subjects and areas of learning.