

Serco Inspections
Cedar House
21 William Street
Edgbaston
Birmingham
B15 1LH

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 M Ridlinton
Headteacher
Grove Primary School
Pickersleigh Grove
Malvern
WR14 2LU

Dear Mr Ridlinton

Notice to improve: monitoring inspection of Grove Primary School

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 18 April 2012 and for the information which you provided during the inspection. Please pass on my thanks to the pupils and staff who met with me, as well as the Vice Chair of the Governing Body and the local authority representative who gave time to speak with me.

There have been a number of staff changes since the last inspection. The governing body recruited three new teachers to teach in the Early Years Foundations Stage and Key Stage 1. In February 2012, a new mathematics coordinator was appointed.

As a result of the inspection on 15 September 2011, 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 is making satisfactory progress in addressing the issues for improvement and in raising the pupils' achievement.

The 2011 Year 6 national tests results show that attainment in English was broadly average. In contrast, attainment in mathematics was well below the national average with too few pupils achieving the expected Level 4. Standards attained by pupils in Year 2 were low, reflecting the impact of high levels of teacher absence and previous underachievement. Girls outperformed boys in reading, writing and mathematics.

The school's assessment data show that although attainment remains low in some year groups, it is rising. This is most notably the case in writing, which has been a focus for the school. Developments in reading and mathematics are more recent, but are beginning to have a positive impact. Across the school a higher proportion of pupils are working at age-related expectations in reading, writing and mathematics than at the time of the last inspection. Inspection evidence confirms that pupils are

making satisfactory progress. Increasing proportions are making good progress, particularly in writing.

The curriculum has been amended to ensure that it provides a progressive learning experience. One pupil commented, 'I used to repeat work before. Now teachers teach us new things.' Topics have been carefully selected in order to make lessons more exciting and relevant for all pupils. As a consequence, the gap between the levels attained by different groups of pupils, such as boys and girls are steadily closing.

The school has made considerable advances with improving attendance. It is now in line with the national average for primary schools. This reflects the school's increased engagement with parents and carers and pupils' growing enjoyment of school.

Teachers and teaching assistants have responded positively to training and coaching from local authority advisers. Staff are reflective and keen to improve their practice in response to feedback. The majority of teaching seen during this inspection was satisfactory, a small proportion was good. School records show that the proportion of good teaching is rising. Nevertheless, there is not yet enough consistently good teaching to accelerate progress in all year groups and across all subjects.

Pupils are keen to learn and their behaviour is satisfactory. In all lessons there are regular opportunities for pupils to discuss their ideas. Teachers use electronic whiteboards well to present new information imaginatively. In the best lessons, teachers make effective use of assessment information to plan activities which meet the needs of pupils of different abilities. Pupils are also encouraged to use criteria to review and refine their work during a lesson, as seen in a Year 6 literacy lesson. In the satisfactory lessons, the pace of learning slows because teachers talk for too long and this reduces the time pupils have to learn and find out for themselves. When this happens, pupils become restless. Occasionally, more-able pupils and those of average ability are not sufficiently challenged because their work is too easy.

When marking pupils' writing, teachers identify the precise steps that pupils need to be taking to improve their work. This is not always the case in mathematics. Pupils in Key Stage 2 appreciate the weekly 'self-study' time. This gives pupils the opportunity to respond to teachers' marking.

The headteacher has tackled weaknesses in teaching and leadership with determination and successfully raised staff expectations of pupils. Systems for monitoring pupils' progress have been considerably strengthened. The headteacher and deputy headteacher work together well to keep a close check on pupils' progress and hold staff to account. Through regular pupil-progress meetings, they identify pupils requiring additional support and tailor it to the pupils' needs. Pupils with disabilities and those with special educational needs are now accurately

identified and appropriate support for learning is provided. Their progress is regularly tracked so that the school can judge the effectiveness of the intervention strategies provided.

Senior leaders' have an accurate understanding of what needs to improve. Their evaluations of the school's work are accurate. Roles and responsibilities are now equitably distributed among all staff. With support from senior leaders and the local authority, middle leaders are developing the skills required to lead developments in their areas of responsibility, but have yet to ensure that pupils in all year groups make accelerated progress in order to overcome previous underachievement.

The governing body is increasingly providing senior leaders with a suitable level of challenge and holding them to account. Through the recently formed 'School Improvement Committee', they are keeping a close check on pupils' progress and the quality of teaching. The school has evaluated and strengthened its promotion of community cohesion. Consequently, pupils are gaining a secure understanding of other cultures. For instance, a link has been established with a school in a contrasting locality. Pupils who visited this school said how much they enjoyed their visit and that they were looking forward to learning from and working with pupils from the school.

The local authority statement of action meets requirements. Local authority advisers have provided the school with a good level of support. Their feedback to the school is accurate and helpful. Local authority advisers have worked in partnership with senior leaders and class teachers to further strengthen the school's capacity to improve provision.

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

Usha Devi
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in September 2011

Increase pupils' rate of progress so that by the end of Year 6 pupils' attainment is at or above the national average by:

- working more effectively with parents and carers to improve attendance levels
- ensuring that pupils make consistently good progress each year
- developing and implementing a curriculum that provides a progressive learning experience for all pupils.

Improve the quality of teaching and learning, so that by July 2012 the majority of lessons are good, by:

- challenging teachers and holding them to account for their pupils' progress and attainment
- improving classroom practice so that lessons move at a faster pace and activities sufficiently challenge pupils of all abilities
- using marking to better inform pupils of their next steps in learning.

Improve the effectiveness of the school's leadership and management by:

- developing a robust tracking system to monitor pupils' progress and attainment in order to gather pertinent information about how well different groups of pupils are performing and ensure there is equality of opportunity for all pupils
- reviewing each leader's role and their capacity to bring about the changes needed, including the leadership of the special educational needs provision
- delegating roles and responsibilities more equitably so as to drive and embed improvement systems more effectively
- ensuring that the school's actions to promote community cohesion are making a positive impact on outcomes for pupils.