

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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Mrs K Surrall
Acting Headteacher
St Oswald's Church of England Primary School
Sion Avenue
Kidderminster
DY10 2YL

Dear Mrs Surrall

Notice to improve: monitoring inspection of St Oswald's Church of England Primary School

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 2 May 2012 and for the information which you provided before and during the inspection. Please pass on my thanks to the pupils, the Local Authority and the Vice Chair of the Governing Body for taking the time to talk to me. It was particularly helpful to spend part of the day with you observing lessons, looking at pupils' work and analysing assessment information.

Since the previous inspection, there have been a number of significant staff changes. The headteacher has resigned and the governing body have appointed a substantive headteacher who will take up his post in September 2012. In the interim period, the governing body have appointed you as acting headteacher for three days a week with the deputy headteacher taking responsibility for the school on the remaining two days. In addition, in February 2012, a teacher was seconded from another school as an assistant headteacher and Year 4 teacher. A new Chair of the Governing Body has been elected alongside five new governors.

As a result of the inspection on 13 October 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 good progress in addressing the issues for improvement and in raising the pupils' achievement.

The governing body and local authority have acted swiftly and decisively to address the issues relating to the leadership and management of the school. You have ensured that all staff clearly understand their roles and accountabilities. The governing body comment positively about the support they have received from the

local authority to strengthen their roles and responsibilities. Governors also report that they are provided with a good range of information about how well the school is progressing. They visit the school to gain first-hand information.

There are robust monitoring procedures and, as a result, the school has an accurate view of its strengths and areas for development. Lessons are regularly observed and teachers receive written and verbal feedback to help them improve. The quality of written feedback is good but, on occasion, overall lesson judgements are not always clear. Under your good leadership, senior leaders are making a greater contribution to improving the school. They have a secure grasp of their areas of responsibility and undertake regular monitoring activities, such as lesson observations and scrutinising teachers' planning and pupils' work. A detailed tracking system ensures that pupils do not fall behind. There is careful tracking of the performance of different groups of pupils, such as those who are known to be eligible for free school meals, those who are disabled or with special educational needs, and those whose attendance is poor. As a result, a greater proportion of pupils are making accelerated progress.

The latest school data indicate that levels of attainment across the school are rising, with a greater proportion of pupils on track to reach expectations for their age. Pupils in Year 6 are working broadly at the expected levels for their age and this represents a significant improvement on 2011 results. Across the school, attainment in reading and mathematics is stronger than in writing. The proportion of pupils making accelerated progress is also improving but remains variable. For example, pupils in Years 2 and 6 are making accelerated progress but weaknesses remain, particularly in writing in Years 3 and 4. Senior leaders have acted quickly to eradicate any underachievement. A daily skills lesson has been introduced and is proving successful in ensuring that pupils do not have any gaps in their learning. The quality of teaching has also been strengthened since the last inspection. In addition to the introduction of pupil progress meetings, a revised teaching and learning policy sets out high expectations for staff. The most recent monitoring judges three-quarters of lessons to be good or better with none inadequate. Lessons observed during the monitoring visit were judged to be good.

Better quality teaching is having a positive impact on raising attainment and accelerating progress. In lessons, pupils are fully engaged in their learning and report that lessons are now more enjoyable and interesting. Teachers regularly assess how well pupils are achieving and use this information to plan lessons. Marking is now more consistent and pupils fully understand the 'green for good' and 'pink for think' marking system. Pupils report that they would appreciate time to make corrections to their work.

The deputy headteacher has been effective in improving rates of attendance and reducing persistent absence. Very detailed records are kept and weekly meetings are held with the education welfare officer to monitor attendance across the school. The attendance policy has been revised and sets out clear expectations for parents and

pupils. All absences are robustly followed up and, as a result, attendance has improved. The most recent data indicate that attendance is moving closer to the national average for primary schools and rates of persistent absence have been reduced by a third in the last half term. The school is beginning to track punctuality, but this is at an early stage of development.

The school has made a positive start to developing pupils' understanding of their place in national and international communities through learning about other faiths and visiting the Islamic Centre in Birmingham.

The local authority statement of action is fit for purpose and has made a good contribution to improving the quality of education at St Oswalds.

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

Marian Harker
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Raise attainment and accelerate rates of progress, particularly in English in Key Stage 2, by:
 - ensuring that teaching is consistently good or better
 - engaging pupils' interest by providing activities that engage pupils, are relevant to pupils' experience and are well matched to individual needs within the class
 - ensuring that pupils understand how well they are doing and how to improve their work.

- Increasing the impact of leaders on raising attainment by:
 - using accurate self-evaluation to inform strategic planning, enabling the identification of priorities for improvement
 - empowering leaders at all levels, including the governing body, so that all know their roles and responsibilities and are provided with the information and tools they need to drive improvement
 - rigorously monitoring teaching and learning in order to identify and address areas for development, and to share good practice
 - analyse the performance of different groups of pupils to ensure equal opportunity and eliminate discrimination.

- Raise attendance rates and improve punctuality by:
 - communicating with parents and carers the importance of ensuring their children's regular and punctual attendance, including the negative impact that taking holidays during term-time has on their children's learning
 - rigorously following-up absences.

- Develop pupils' understanding of their place in the national and international communities by:
 - providing opportunities for pupils to obtain first-hand experience of schools in other contexts.