

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

29 June 2012

Mr J Keay
Executive Headteacher
Heathfields Infant School
Saxon Close
Wilnecote
Tamworth
B77 5LU

Dear Mr Keay

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Heathfields Infant School

Following my visit to your school on 26–27 June 2012, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings.

The inspection was the third monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in June 2011. The full list of the areas for improvement which were identified during that inspection is set out in the annex to this letter. The monitoring inspection report is attached and the main judgements are set out below.

Progress since being subject to special measures – good.

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – good.

The school may appoint up to two newly qualified teachers, subject to suitable mentoring arrangements to be approved by HMI.

This letter and monitoring inspection report will be posted on the Ofsted website. I am copying this letter and the monitoring inspection report to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Staffordshire.

Yours sincerely

Ceri Morgan

Ceri Morgan
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management in securing ambition and driving improvement by:
 - ensuring that senior leaders adopt a clear, united and consistent approach to all aspects of school improvement
 - developing the knowledge and skills of the governing body to enable closer scrutiny of the school's work, so that weaknesses and inconsistencies are resolved
 - developing the role of subject leaders in order to improve the quality of self-evaluation and extend opportunities to model good practice.

- Raise pupils' levels of attainment in reading and writing and accelerate the rate of their learning and progress by:
 - ensuring greater consistency and quality in the teaching of letters and sounds (phonics), reading (comprehension) and writing
 - improving pupils' attendance levels to at least the national average.

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is consistently good or better in all classes by:
 - ensuring that teachers swiftly identify, within lessons, when pupils are ready for the next steps in their learning
 - ensuring teachers' marking and feedback clearly identifies the next steps pupils need to take in their learning in order to improve
 - sharing best practice to eliminate inconsistencies between classes in the pace of learning and the level of challenge provided to pupils.

Special measures: monitoring of Heathfields Infant School

Report from the third monitoring inspection on 26–27 June 2012

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with representatives from the governing body, the local authority and the Local Leader in Education working with the school. Every teacher was observed teaching and discussions were held with pupils and senior staff. An extensive sample of pupils' work was analysed and evidence of parental views were gathered from the recent parent forum notes and the Parent View website.

Context

Since the last monitoring visit, there have been significant changes to leadership at Heathfields. Following the resignation of the previous headteacher, Heathfields is being led by an executive headteacher from Wilnecote Junior School. The additional support of a local headteacher from a nearby school is being maintained and the substantive appointment of a deputy headteacher has been completed. The school also receives support from the inclusion manager from Wilnecote Junior following the resignation of the special educational needs coordinator at Heathfields. These arrangements are expected to be in place until September 2013 at least. Significant improvements to the premises have taken place, including to the outdoor learning area for the youngest pupils and to site security. There is an independent Children's Centre on site which does not form part of the inspection.

Achievement of pupils at the school

Attainment continues to improve rapidly, particularly in reading and mathematics. Although there is also good improvement in writing, a gender gap is emerging in standards of writing, with girls outperforming boys.

The school has completed assessments for Year 2 in 2012 which shows that 79% of pupils have reached the required level in mathematics and writing, and 83% in reading. These are in line with national averages. The proportion of pupils reaching the higher levels in mathematics and reading is also now in line with national averages as a result of the increased levels of challenge and expectation shown by teachers. Around a third of all Year 2 pupils reached the higher level in mathematics, for example. This success is not yet replicated in writing, with few pupils managing to achieve the higher levels. Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make slightly less progress than their peers, whereas those known to be eligible for free school meals make progress in line with all pupils.

In mathematics, strengths include confidence and accuracy in basic number work. Youngest pupils count fluently and can solve simple number problems whilst older pupils have a good grasp of basic number skills which they use to attempt challenging word problems. Pupils in Year 2 have a good understanding of data handling and draw charts and graphs with accuracy. They have few opportunities to interpret these charts, however. Throughout the school, pupils routinely use correct vocabulary associated with shape and space. In Reception, for example, they were challenged to exactly cover a play mat in the new outdoor area with large squashy shapes. This led them to an enthusiastic debate about the difference between a curved edge and a straight face on three-dimensional models.

In English, pupils use extensive vocabulary to explain their thinking, including, on occasions, some very technical vocabulary, such as 'grapheme' and 'phoneme' alongside adjectives, nouns and verbs. They understand these and use them to improve their writing. Presentation is now good, with some neat handwriting by pupils of all ages and some good extended text written by older pupils. Pupils in Year 2, for example, were delighted to write at length about the exploits of the rather heroic Traction Man. Basic grammar is now evident in sentences. However, despite these improvements, there is variation in the quality of writing between boys and girls, especially at the higher levels.

Progress since the last monitoring inspection on the areas for improvement:

- raise pupils' levels of attainment in reading and writing and accelerate the rate of their learning and progress – good.

The quality of teaching

Teaching continues to improve, with a growing proportion that is good. However, there remains a variation in quality between classes, and the majority observed was satisfactory. In all classes, relationships between pupils and teachers are positive and encourage good attitudes to learning. Teachers question pupils well, allow time to respond at length, and offer greater challenge. Good planning and the use of a wide range of resources to stimulate interest are commonplace. One reason why teaching was judged satisfactory rather than better, however, was the occurrence of sessions which prevented pupils from working independently for any substantial period of time. This has stopped pupils from developing resilience in tackling complex problems. Occasionally, pupils sit for lengthy introductions, which limits the time available for sustained work. Although most teachers assess pupils' work accurately, this is not always the case. Marking is done diligently but, occasionally, is simply a summary of what work is covered rather than evaluating how well it was done. There is a noticeable difference in the quality of feedback between regular teachers and supply cover colleagues. The new phonics sessions are helpful and successful, and have injected into school a rigour in using letter sounds and blends. This is helping to secure better spelling and reading standards. However, the

sessions are currently separate to other literacy lessons and the content does not always sit well together. Teaching assistants offer good support for pupils who have additional needs, especially for those with disabilities.

Progress since the last monitoring inspection on the areas for improvement:

- improve the quality of teaching so that it is consistently good or better in all classes – satisfactory.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Behaviour is satisfactory but better in lessons than in the playground. Pupils show a keenness to learn and very positive attitudes to their lessons. They are very polite and welcoming to visitors. Teachers generally manage behaviour well although, in some classes, the ways in which they do this are overly elaborate. Pupils say that bullying is not a problem, although sometimes lunchtimes can be 'a bit rough and tumble'. Exclusions have reduced to nil since Easter 2012. The school completes all safety checks thoroughly and, as a consequence of a recent review, has taken steps to improve site security for vulnerable pupils.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

The new temporary executive headteacher has gained the confidence of pupils and the wider school community very rapidly. He has ensured that the rate of school improvement has increased through a focus on pupil progress, strong organisational skills, and attention to detail. It helps that he is already known to many families, but parental views are very positive about his leadership. Capacity at a strategic level has been enhanced by the completion of some crucial appointments, adding clarity to roles, and the pro-active use of personnel from other schools to support development. This includes the recent good work of an inclusion manager to refresh the analysis of the progress made by disabled pupils and those with special educational needs. This is leading to greater equality of opportunity. Collaboration between senior leadership and governance across three schools has strengthened leadership almost immediately. For example, the governing body at Heathfields reacted quickly to the need for stability of leadership and shows increased ambition for the school.

The new leadership team have conducted an initial evaluation of the school's strengths and weaknesses. This evaluation is accurate but, as a consequence of the 'newness' of the arrangements, is generic rather than forensic in detail. For example, lesson monitoring is frequent and accurate but not specific enough in purpose to contribute the detail needed for the school development plan.

Progress since the last monitoring inspection on the areas for improvement:

- improve the effectiveness of leadership and management in securing ambition and driving improvement – good.

External support

External support is good. The school receives strong support from the Local Leader in Education, the sister junior school and the local authority. There are good links with a wide range of external agencies and effective collaboration is emerging across all aspects of the school's work.

Priorities for further improvement

- Increase the time available for pupils to develop independent learning and resilience in solving problems.
- Use the opportunities for forensic monitoring provided by the close liaison with junior and other schools to lead to detailed school improvement planning.