

Serco Inspections
Colmore Plaza
20 Colmore Circus T 0300 123 1231
Queensway Text Phone: 0161 6188524
Birmingham enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
B4 6AT www.ofsted.gov.uk Direct T: 0121 679 9163
Direct email: lewis.mackie1@serco.com



14 March 2013

Robert Fletcher
Headteacher
Fordbridge Community Primary School
Yorklea Croft
Chelmsley Wood
Birmingham
B37 5EG

Dear Mr Fletcher

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Fordbridge Community Primary School

Following my visit with Jeffery Plumb, Additional Inspector, to your school on 12–13 March 2013, 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 January 2012. 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 – satisfactory.

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – good.

One newly qualified teacher may be appointed if guidance and support is provided by a teacher whose quality of teaching is consistently good or better.

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 Solihull.

Yours sincerely

Usha Devi
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in January 2012

- Improve the quality of teaching so that a high proportion is good or better by:
 - ensuring that all lessons have clear and measurable objectives and that activities contain more learning opportunities
 - devising a questioning strategy to be used consistently by adults to ensure that all pupils respond to an appropriately challenging question in each lesson
 - ensuring that teachers check carefully during and at the end of all lessons that pupils have understood the work and this feedback is used to plan subsequent learning.

- Raise Key Stage 2 attainment in English and mathematics so that Year 6 pupils exceed the national average, especially in reading.

- Improve leadership and management throughout the school by:
 - ensuring that action planning at all levels has a few key priorities with measurable success criteria that are focused on improving outcomes for pupils
 - review the management structure to ensure that all post holders are held to account for raising standards
 - improve the leadership of special education needs provision to ensure that all pupils on the special educational needs register have clear targets and appropriate support to achieve them.

Special measures: monitoring of Fordbridge Community Primary School

Report from the third monitoring inspection on 12–13 March 2013

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, consultant headteacher, senior leaders, middle leaders, the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Governing Body, a group of pupils and a representative from the local authority. Inspectors reviewed pupils' writing and mathematics books with the headteacher. They also met with some pupils who need extra help and reviewed these pupils' work.

Context

One teacher remains absent through illness. Following a period of absence, a Reception class teacher returned to full-time work in March. A Year 1 class teacher returned to work at the start of this term. She has been deployed to teach in Reception. During this visit, two Year 4 teachers and one assistant headteacher were absent. As part of the local authority support arrangements, a consultant headteacher continues to support school leaders.

Achievement of pupils at the school

Standards are rising more quickly than at the time of the last monitoring inspection. The school's most recent assessment information shows that the large majority of pupils are now working at or above the levels expected for their age in reading and mathematics. Standards in writing were particularly low. They are now improving and range from below average to in line with the national average.

Lesson observations and pupils' work confirm that pupils are making faster progress. An increasing proportion of children in the Nursery and Reception classes and pupils in Years 1, 2, 5 and 6 are making good progress because of better teaching. There remain some differences in learning because of variations in the quality of teaching. In some classes in Years 3 and 4, for instance, teachers do not ensure that pupils have regular opportunities to write at length and that activities in mathematics always build on what pupils already know.

School information indicates that pupils who need extra help and those who are eligible for the pupil premium (which provides additional funding for pupils in local authority care and those known to be eligible for free school meals) do not always make as much progress as other groups in the school. This situation is improving. School leaders have recently introduced a range of interventions to ensure that these pupils receive the specific support they need. Inspectors found that they are

making better progress than in the recent past, with some now making good progress.

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

- raise Key Stage 2 attainment in English and mathematics so that Year 6 pupils exceed the national average, especially in reading – good.

The quality of teaching

The quality of teaching has significantly improved. There is a greater proportion of consistently good and outstanding teaching, and a marked reduction in inadequate teaching. Half of the lessons seen by inspectors were good or better. This improving picture is also confirmed by the school's and the local authority's observations of teaching and work in pupils' books.

Across the school, pupils have more frequent opportunities to discuss and develop their ideas with others. Teaching assistants provide individual pupils and groups of pupils with effective support. During lessons, more teachers are helping pupils to use their knowledge of sounds and letters to read unfamiliar words. Pupils' work is regularly marked but teachers do not always tell pupils what they need to do to improve their work.

Where teaching is good or better, teachers ensure that activities are suitably challenging for all groups of pupils. Lessons start briskly to ensure that pupils have sufficient time to work on their own and produce a substantial amount of work by the end of the lesson. In one outstanding example, the Year 6 teacher created a 'ghostly' atmosphere by using music, images and candles. The teacher asked individual pupils questions to extend their thinking and to encourage them to explore how the sailors on the ship must have felt before asking them to write a story.

Pupils do not always make good or better progress for a number of reasons. During lessons, teachers do not always move pupils on to new learning quickly enough. Sometimes, teachers do not expect pupils to produce enough work or they set work that is too easy. This tends to be more common in mathematics than in writing. Occasionally, pupils do not make enough progress because teachers do not make best use of assessment information to plan activities which are well matched to the learning needs of pupils of different abilities.

Considerable improvements are evident in the Nursery and Reception classes. The equipment in the classrooms encourages children to do things for themselves. The activities that teachers plan for children are relevant and interesting. For example, children were observed enjoying learning about spring flowers and describing the weather. Teachers and teaching assistants encourage pupils to develop their speaking and listening skills. Staff do not always correct children's writing errors.

Consequently, when writing, some children continue to find it difficult to form their letters correctly and also reverse letters such as 'b' and 'd'.

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

- improve the quality of teaching so that a high proportion is good or better – good.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

The behaviour of most pupils continues to improve in lessons and around school. Pupils are keen to learn and talk about their work. They are polite and treat each other with respect. During this monitoring inspection, a few parents and pupils expressed concerns about the behaviour of some pupils. Inspectors found that a small minority of pupils find it difficult to behave appropriately and the school has suitable procedures in place for responding to incidents of poor behaviour. Senior leaders acknowledge that there is scope for further strengthening the range of support available for pupils with specific emotional and social needs. Pupils told inspectors they feel well cared for and safe. Attendance remains in line with the national average for primary schools.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

The headteacher, in partnership with the consultant headteacher and the local authority, has continued to drive the school forward. The school improvement plan has been revised. It accurately identifies the actions that need to be taken to improve the quality of teaching and help all pupils to make better progress. The headteacher is using information about pupils' progress well to take decisive action and tackle the remaining weaknesses in teaching.

The contribution of other senior leaders to school improvement is inconsistent. Since the last monitoring inspection, the senior leader with responsibility for reading in Nursery, Reception and Key Stage 1 has provided teachers and teaching assistants with useful support. There is now a more structured approach to the teaching of sounds and letters. Activities for pupils during reading lessons are also better matched to the needs of pupils of different abilities. In contrast, other senior leaders are not yet making changes with a sufficient sense of urgency. To resolve this issue, procedures for managing the performance of staff have been further strengthened. The headteacher has set all senior leaders measurable targets that are closely linked to pupils' achievement and the quality of teaching. He has given senior leaders clear timescales within which important actions must be completed.

Despite the variations at senior leadership level, leadership in the rest of the school continues to strengthen. This is because the headteacher is giving other teachers in

the school the opportunity to lead important developments. For instance, middle leaders are making an effective contribution towards improving the quality of teaching and pupils' learning in the school and are leading changes with enthusiasm. They are regularly checking the work of staff, providing them with the necessary support and identifying the actions that need to be taken to help pupils to make even better progress. However, they do not always check that teachers are doing all they can to ensure that pupils who are not making enough progress catch up quickly.

The teacher with responsibility for pupils who need extra help is working well with the Vice-Chair of the Governing Body to extend further the support available for this group of pupils. This is helping them to make faster progress. Procedures for carefully checking and accurately recording how well these pupils are learning are still in the early stages.

The Chair of the Governing Body continues to provide a good level of support and challenge. He is currently working with the headteacher to review the performance of pupils who are eligible for the pupil premium in order to ensure that the school is making effective use of this additional funding. Local authority training is enabling members of the governing body to ask searching questions about the impact of the school's actions on the performance of different groups of pupils. Individual members of the governing body are planning to visit more regularly and check for themselves the work of the school.

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

- improve leadership and management throughout the school – good.

External support

The local authority continues to provide a good level of support. Their recent review of achievement, teaching and leadership in the school is accurate and correctly identifies the school's strengths and where further improvements are required. Teachers have benefited from the support and advice from the local authority advisers and the consultant headteacher. This has had a beneficial impact on the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement.