

Serco Inspections  
Colmore Plaza  
20 Colmore Circus  
Queensway  
Birmingham  
B4 6AT

T 0300 123 1231  
Text Phone: 0161 618 8524  
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk  
www.ofsted.gov.uk

**Direct T:** 0121 679 9164  
**Direct email:** tim.ogbourn@serco.com



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Mrs Bozena Laraway  
Executive Headteacher  
Cherry Tree Primary School, Basildon  
Church Road  
Basildon  
SS16 4AG

Dear Mrs Laraway

**Special measures monitoring inspection of Cherry Tree Primary School, Basildon**

Following my visit to your school on 9 July 2013, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave during the inspection and for the time you made available to discuss the actions which have been taken since the school's recent section 5 inspection.

The inspection was the third monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place on 19 March 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.

Having considered all the evidence, I am of the opinion that at this time the school is making reasonable progress towards the removal of special measures.

Up to two newly qualified teachers may be appointed in Key Stages 1 or 2.

This letter and monitoring inspection report will be published 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 Essex.

Yours sincerely

Adrian Lyons  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## Annex

### **The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in March 2012**

- Increase the proportion of good and better teaching in order to accelerate pupils' progress in mathematics by:
  - introducing a rigorous programme to develop the subject knowledge and expertise of staff in teaching mathematics and monitoring its impact
  - planning opportunities for pupils to develop their numeracy skills effectively across all subjects
  - consistently challenging the more-able pupils so that they achieve to the best of their ability
  - providing more helpful comments to pupils through the marking of their work on the steps they need to take to meet their targets.
- Improve the teaching of phonics and accelerate the development of pupils' early reading skills by:
  - ensuring that phonics tasks and materials are well matched to pupils' skills and capabilities
  - ensuring that each lesson focuses more sharply on the next stages in learning for all pupils.
- Improve behaviour in lessons and around the school by:
  - involving staff, pupils, the governing body, parents and carers in reviewing the behaviour policy so there is a shared and common understanding of principles and procedures
  - setting clear and consistent expectations in classrooms for pupils' behaviour
  - providing training and guidance for all staff in the implementation of procedures for behaviour management.
- Build the school's leadership capacity and impact by:
  - sharpening the accuracy of school self-evaluation
  - ensuring that planning to tackle key priorities is based on challenging targets for improving the pupils' achievement
  - developing the role played by the governing body in holding the school to account.

**Special measures: monitoring of Cherry Tree Primary School, Basildon****Report on the third monitoring inspection on 9 July 2013****Evidence**

The inspector observed the school's work, making short visits to nine lessons in Years 1 to 6 and the Early Years Foundation Stage, and a whole-school assembly. He examined pupils' books and met with the executive headteacher, the acting headteacher and a group of pupils.

**Context**

At the time of the last monitoring visit it was evident that the school had made significant progress in addressing the areas for improvement from the March 2012 inspection, but the leadership of the school from September 2013 was uncertain. The executive headteacher will end her involvement with the school at the end of this term. Since the last monitoring inspection the deputy headteacher has become the acting headteacher. A new headteacher has been appointed for September. Plans are well advanced for the school to become an academy, sponsored by CfBT, from some point in the autumn term. This monitoring inspection was carried out by one inspector for one day. It checked that improvements were continuing, and focused on the achievement of pupils.

**Achievement of pupils at the school**

The latest national test results for pupils in Year 6 show some improvement at Level 4 in mathematics. The gap between this school's attainment in mathematics and the national average has reduced. Attainment in English is similar to the national average. The most notable improvement is in the results of the Year 1 screening check on phonics (the linking of letters and sounds).

Pupils' progress in mathematics has improved well this year. Last year only 69% of the Year 6 pupils had made the progress expected nationally, whereas this year 86% did so. In writing and reading the improvement was less obvious, but the proportions of pupils making expected progress were already high, and in writing this year half of the Year 6 pupils had exceeded expected progress. The school's assessments were confirmed as accurate by the local authority. This year's test results indicate that the areas for improvement concerned with accelerating pupils' progress in mathematics and improving the teaching of phonics have been tackled well. Pupils were keen to tell the inspector that 'we're improving our grammar to help us speak more clearly' and 'our handwriting is improving'.

## **The quality of teaching**

In all the lessons visited pupils were actively engaged in learning. Teachers and other adults were working effectively with groups of pupils. All classrooms are vibrant with useful displays. Pupils told the inspector that they have more equipment to help them learn, including some tablet computers. The marking of books is regular, and teachers' comments tell pupils what they need to do to improve their work. There have been other improvements since the last visit. It is clear from pupils' books that marking is followed up. Books are used for conversations between teachers and pupils. Pupils told the inspector that when the teacher sets 'next steps' in the marking, the teacher checks that we have done it 'or we get a post-it note'.

## **Behaviour and safety of pupils**

Behaviour around the school continues to be calm and courteous. Over the last year, it has been transformed from a negative element of the school to a very positive one. Pupils confirm that behaviour is good. In all the lessons visited pupils were very focused on their work. Classrooms are industrious places where pupils clearly enjoy their learning. Assemblies continue to play a positive role in promoting pupils' cultural understanding. There is sometimes less clarity regarding spiritual development. Pupils say that there is no bullying, but if any should arise they know how to report it. They are confident that it would be dealt with quickly, but are less clear about the range of types of bullying. Parents' views are not clear as there have been no responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View).

## **The quality of leadership in and management of the school**

The quality of leadership was commented upon positively in the last monitoring letter. Leaders and governors responded to the reservation expressed in the monitoring report regarding interim leadership arrangements by appointing an acting headteacher supported by the executive headteacher. A new headteacher has been appointed for September. She is experienced in this role, with a track record of making schools better. The current team of executive headteacher and acting headteacher has been very effective in first stabilising the school and then driving forward rapid improvement.

## **External support**

This was not considered in detail during this visit. Support from the local authority has reduced, reflecting the school's increased capacity to improve without external help. Support has continued but its nature has been more directed by school leaders and less decided by the local authority. Similarly the involvement of the executive headteacher's school has diminished as the need has reduced, but has continued to have a positive impact.