

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

T 0300 123 1231
Text Phone: 0161 6188524
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk

Direct T 0121 679 9158
Direct email: rachel.dayan@serco.com



10 July 2014

Miss Paulette Osborne
The Executive Headteacher
Harper Bell Seventh Day Adventist School
29 Ravenhurst Street
Camp Hill
Birmingham
B12 0EJ

Dear Miss Osborne

Special measures monitoring inspection of Harper Bell Seventh Day Adventist School

Following my visit to your school on 8–9 July 2014, 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 previous monitoring inspection.

The inspection was the fourth monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in March 2013. 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.

The school may appoint three newly qualified teachers before the next monitoring inspection. The training and support for newly qualified teachers should be provided and led by the executive deputy headteacher from St Matthew's Church of England Primary School.

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 Interim Executive Board (IEB) and the Director of Children's Services for Birmingham.

Yours sincerely

Peter Humphries
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in March 2013

- Improve the quality of teaching and speed up pupils' progress by:
 - making sure lessons help pupils learn at an appropriately brisk pace
 - making sure that teachers know how well pupils are doing and plan lessons that help pupils to learn more
 - giving children in the Reception and Nursery classes more choice to learn through a range of activities
 - providing more opportunities for pupils to study science, history and geography and acquire ICT skills
 - increasing the amount of work pupils do to use and practise their mathematical skills
 - giving pupils clearer guidance on how to improve their work.

- Make sure that the school meets safeguarding requirements by:
 - carrying out fire drills at the start of each term
 - ensuring that staff know the whereabouts of all children at all times.

- Improve behaviour by implementing a system for tackling disobedience and bullying, involving sanctions and rewards, which is used consistently by all staff.

- Improve the effectiveness of leaders, managers and governors by:
 - providing training, support and resources to teachers in charge of subjects to improve teaching and raise standards in their subjects across the school
 - implementing a rigorous programme to check and improve the quality of teaching
 - making sure that the teacher responsible for coordinating provision for special educational needs receives the full backing of senior leaders and the scope to take steps to improve the progress of pupils who find learning difficult
 - training governors to check the school's work and giving them accurate information so that they are able to hold senior leaders to account
 - improving leaders' methods for checking on pupils' progress and using this information to improve the quality of teaching
 - undertaking an external review of governance to assess how this aspect of leadership may be improved.

Report on the fourth monitoring inspection on 8–9 July 2014

Evidence

During this inspection, I jointly observed learning and teaching with the operational headteacher in a range of subjects in each of the school's eight classes, including the Early Years Foundation Stage. Meetings were held with the executive headteacher, operational headteacher, and other leaders including the special educational needs coordinator (SENCO) and behaviour coordinator (BECO) and members of the IEB. Discussions were held with pupils, members of staff and parents. The views of parents were noted from the 33 responses on Parent View. Telephone conversations were held with the Chair of the IEB, a representative from the local authority and the Birmingham diocese. I scrutinised a range of documentation including the school's analysis of pupils' current attainment and progress, monitoring records of the quality of teaching undertaken by school leaders, and the minutes of meetings of the IEB. Additional documentation was scrutinised, including information about pupils' attendance and the vetting checks on staff new to the school.

Context

Since the previous monitoring inspection in May 2014, a class teacher has left the school. As a result, two teachers have been allocated to teach different classes. The school has appointed an Early Years Foundation Stage leader, two class teachers and an executive senior leader to start in September 2014. The school's leaders, in partnership with the local authority and the proposed sponsor, the Birmingham diocese, continue to pursue academy status. The number of pupils on roll at the school has increased to 206.

Achievement of pupils at the school

Since the last monitoring inspection, school staff have worked effectively to close the gaps in pupils' achievement brought about by a legacy of poor teaching over time. A range of interventions has been put in place to support pupils' learning. For example, interventions to support literacy have resulted in rapid gains in pupils' reading skills. However, the progress in the development of pupils' writing skills is slower. School leaders have sharpened the systems for collecting and analysing information about pupils' progress. These now allow incisive analysis of progress against targets. Improved teaching, targeted interventions and improved teacher awareness are combining to close gaps in achievement, particularly in reading.

However, information provided by the school shows that, in Key Stage 2, there is still much to do to ensure pupils' progress in writing and mathematics is good across all year groups. In Year 3, the high turnover of classroom teachers is reflected in pupils' generally slow progress in writing and mathematics. However, pupils'

progress in reading is faster. The high turnover of teachers in Year 3 has been resolved. In Year 4, the recent stability in teaching is ensuring pupils are beginning to make reasonable progress in reading, writing and mathematics. The staffing in Year 5 has been stable throughout the year. As a consequence, pupils in this year group are making expected progress in reading, writing and mathematics. In Year 6, pupils' progress in reading is good. However, the legacy of poor teaching has meant that pupils' progress in writing and mathematics is below national averages. Staffing issues have been resolved, and a scrutiny of the current work of pupils in Year 6 shows that they are making reasonable progress across all subjects.

In Key Stage 1, pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics is good. This is particularly the case in Year 2 as the vast majority of pupils make expected or good progress in all subjects.

The proportion of children reaching a good stage of development in the Early Years Foundation Stage continues to increase.

School leaders are aware of the weaknesses in pupils' writing and have provided training for staff. The writing seen in pupils' books in all year groups in all subjects shows that these actions are improving the quality of pupils' writing.

The school is making progress closing the gaps in achievement between different groups such as those for whom the school receives additional government funding, known as the pupil premium, and those who are not.

The quality of teaching

The quality of teaching across all year groups has improved since the inspection in March 2013. Since the monitoring inspection in May 2014, improvements in teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage are ensuring children are engaged and interested in the learning activities and making progress typical for their age. Children in the Nursery and Reception classes have opportunities to learn a range of skills through a variety of activities that are freely chosen and adult led. This enables children to work on their own and to find things out for themselves. The teaching of phonics, the sounds letters make, is good in the Early Years Foundation Stage and allows children to break down and build up words with confidence. However, though improving, the use and application of the school's learning and teaching and marking and feedback policies remain inconsistent across the school.

Observations and a scrutiny of pupils' work show that teaching now enables most pupils to make reasonable progress in Key Stage 2 and good progress in Key Stage 1.

Staff have received training on how to provide effective feedback to help pupils improve their work. Teachers' questioning and verbal and written feedback enable

pupils to correct mistakes, better understand the work and to develop thinking skills. Pupils stated that they find the teachers' comments helpful in improving their work. However, where teaching is less effective, teachers rely too heavily on a small number of pupils to provide the answers.

When teaching is effective, teachers' good subject knowledge and accurate assessment of pupils' abilities are used to plan learning opportunities that are matched to their needs and engage their interest. However, in some instances, the most able pupils are given work that fails to stretch their capabilities. As a consequence, their progress is inhibited. When asked, a minority of parents said that their children get too much work that is easy to complete and fails to speed up their progress.

Pupils are given opportunities to use and practise their mathematical skills. As a consequence, pupils' improved reasoning, knowledge and understanding enable them to solve problems by using strategies such as breaking complicated calculations down into more manageable sums.

Teaching assistants and additional adults are carefully directed by class teachers, with the result that pupils of all abilities are supported in their learning.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils behave well around the school and in most lessons. Pupils' attitudes to learning are positive and work in pupils' books is well presented, accurate and completed. Pupils say that teachers manage behaviour well. However, pupils' behaviour deteriorates when teaching fails to provide challenge or interest. A minority of pupils fail to comply with the school uniform rules. Pupils' attendance is above national figures. There are no pupils who are persistently absent for 15% or more school days. Pupils say they feel safe and that any bullying is quickly tackled by staff.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

The improvements in the quality of learning and teaching and in the progress pupils make are evidence that most school leaders are effective in their roles.

School leaders continue to provide training for staff. Observations and a scrutiny of pupils' work show that training, for example on marking and feedback, is having a positive effect on pupils' progress. One teacher new to the school stated, 'I have learnt more in the last three months at Harper Bell than I have in the past five years.' The vast majority of staff who spoke with the inspector stated they were positive about the training and support and the need to ensure pupils learn at a faster rate. However, a minority of staff do not consistently apply school policies or the knowledge and understanding they have gained through training.

School leaders have introduced regular checks on the quality of teaching and pupils' progress and behaviour. However, the information generated by these checks is not always used to update how staff step in to improve pupils' learning and behaviour. For example, the SENCO and BECO are unable to say how effectively interventions have improved the progress of pupils' who find learning difficult.

Improvements have been made to the school's information and communication technology (ICT) infrastructure. For example, a server and wireless network have been installed. Teachers now have laptops, and pupils have access to laptops and tablet computers. The ICT curriculum has been revised and all pupils are aware of how to keep themselves safe when using computer technology.

The IEB, established in April 2014, has a good understanding of the school's strengths and areas for improvement. Members of the IEB have the necessary knowledge and skills to question school leaders about pupils' progress and to provide support when needed. The IEB has supported school leaders in tackling the underperformance of teachers and in appointing new teachers and middle and senior leaders. As a result, leaders have increased capacity to raise standards. Essential policies have been reviewed and safeguarding checks meet current requirements. For example, fire drills are carried out at least once a term.

An application to the Secretary of State for Education has been made to form a multi-academy trust with St Matthew's Church of England Primary School, St Mary's Church of England Primary Academy and Nursery and St Michael's Church of England Junior and Infant School.

External support

The support from St Matthew's Church of England Primary School has been strengthened by the appointment of one of its senior leaders to be based at Harper Bell Seventh Day Adventist School. Appropriate staff training and support have been provided by St Matthew's Church of England Primary School and St Mary's Church of England Primary Academy and Nursery.

The local authority has provided additional funding to ensure school buildings meet health and safety requirements. Support and guidance have been provided for teachers, middle leaders and administration staff.