

Serco Education
Boundary House
2 Wythall Green
Way
Middle Lane
Birmingham
B47 6LW

T 08456 40 40 40
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk



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Mr Wynne
Yardley Wood Primary School
School Road
Birmingham
West Midlands
B14 4ER

Dear Mr Wynne

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Yardley Wood

Following my visit with Barry Wood, Additional Inspector, to your school on 1 and 2 December 2009, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the fifth monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures in January 2008. The monitoring inspection report is attached and the main judgements are set out below.

Progress since being subject to special measures – inadequate.
Progress since previous monitoring inspection – satisfactory.

Newly qualified teachers may not be appointed.

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 governors and the Strategic Director of Children, Young People and Families for Birmingham.

Yours sincerely

Kevin Sheldrick

Her Majesty's Inspector

Special measures: monitoring of Yardley Wood Primary School

Report from the fifth monitoring inspection on 1 and 2 December 2009

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, groups of pupils, governors and a representative from the LA.

Context

There have been no changes in context since the last visit.

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning

Achievement is inadequate because attainment is low and pupils do not make sufficient progress by the time they reach Year 6. In lessons the quality of pupil's learning and the progress they make has improved and is now satisfactory. This improvement applies to different groups, including the more able. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make at least expected progress. Pupils are generally showing more enthusiasm for their school work although some lack confidence in improving the quality of their work and in applying their learning to more unusual contexts.

Pupils in the Early Years Foundation Stage are making satisfactory progress. Attainment by the end of Year 2 was in line with national averages in 2009. At the end of Year 6 results were low, particularly in mathematics, although the outcomes in science were better. During the visit pupils' better progress was particularly evident in Years 3 to 6. Pupils' increased awareness of their levels and what they must do to improve is resulting in more rapid progress in English. In younger age groups changes to staffing have resulted in some variability in the progress pupils are making. In mathematics pupils do not have sufficient opportunity to routinely apply their developing mathematical thinking through problem-solving activity. There are signs of improvement in science, particularly in Years 4 to 6 but elsewhere an over-reliance on worksheets is limiting the progress pupils can make.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- raise standards in English, mathematics and science and accelerate the rate of progress of the average and above average attaining pupils – satisfactory .

Other relevant pupil outcomes

Pupils indicate that they think the school does well in encouraging them to live healthy lives. They eat healthily at lunchtime and all participate in at least two hours of physical exercise. A small minority of pupils continue to participate in off-task behaviour and this can be distracting to the majority who are generally keen to learn. Attendance is below average and the low attainment suggests pupils are not well prepared for the next stage in their education. The number of pupils with very poor attendance is too high and this is a barrier to their future progress. Pupils are keen to have more opportunities to take responsibility and influence decision-making through the school council and in lessons generally.

The effectiveness of provision

Improvements to teaching continue, particularly in Years 3 to 6. In English and mathematics planning takes account of 3 levels of ability in most lessons. Teachers' usually identify the outcomes for the different groups and occasionally these are linked to pupils' personal targets. The placing of levels in the front of pupils' books is enabling them, particularly the most able, to recognise the level they are at and what they must do to improve. Effective marking in Year 5 using these levels is encouraging pupils to produce their best work. Marking generally is a lot better although there are year groups where this improvement is less evident. Pupils routinely feedback to staff, how confident they feel about the outcomes, particularly at the end of lessons. Where teaching is more effective learning is reviewed at different stages of the lesson, This frequently provides positive feedback that motivates pupils as well as further clarifying the required learning outcomes. In a weaker lesson pupils struggled to recognise what they had learnt because the lesson did not promote an awareness of the learning outcomes.

Questioning has improved with more examples seen of teachers targeting questions at particular groups and more strategies to ensure all pupils have to think about responses. For instance, in Year 3 the teacher used whiteboards well to check on every pupil's understanding. In the better lessons teachers are adjusting their plans in the light of pupils' responses. Teaching assistants are deployed effectively to support those pupils working at the lower levels although lessons were observed where they were used less well, often because pupils spent too long on the carpet listening to teachers' introductions.

The improved mix of different activities is making learning more enjoyable. The promising practice observed at the last visit of developing investigative activity from pupils' ideas is gradually increasing. The use of film continues to be strength, for instance boys demonstrated a lot of enthusiasm to write because of the work undertaken on Toy Story. In Year 1 role play is used regularly so pupils have to apply their learning, for instance teaching a puppet how to tell the time. Elsewhere there are too few opportunities for pupils to apply their learning through role play and through engagement in analysing interesting tricky problems. As a result pupils do not always show resilience when confronted with unfamiliar and challenging contexts. The school is at an early stage of using the full range of subjects to



reinforce developing skills. Although teachers use information and communication technology regularly inspectors saw limited evidence of this medium being used to enable pupils to apply their learning and solve problems. The school now has some effective practice but there continue to be too many lessons in which this practice is not evident.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- improve the quality of teaching and learning, ensuring teachers plan lessons which provide all pupils with sufficient challenge and activities that are well - matched to their ability – satisfactory.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Leadership and management are improving steadily. The headteacher's enthusiasm and positive manner inspires confidence in others. There is greater realism about the further improvement that must be made and the school's self-review is an accurate summary of its strengths and weaknesses in most areas. The school is clear about the quality of teaching and learning although the track record of outcomes for pupils is not yet sufficient to justify the school's view of its capacity for sustained improvement. Targets are appropriately challenging in Year 6 but those at Year 2 do not communicate such high expectations.

The school now has a better understanding of assessment and its value in monitoring progress. Leaders are demonstrating increased effectiveness in their roles, for instance phase leaders are challenging teachers when assessment evidence suggests individual pupils, including the more able are not making sufficient progress. The school has taken effective steps to ensure it maintains an accurate overview of subject development across the entire school. The leader responsible for special needs is improving provision for this group and is developing a whole school perspective. There continues to be insufficient analysis of the outcomes for all groups of pupils. This means the school does not have all the evidence needed to support the judgement it makes about achievement and it jeopardises the preventative action it might take to ensure equal opportunities.

Governance is improving because of the greater emphasis given to scrutinising the outcomes the school is achieving. The evidence available to inspectors suggests safeguarding procedures are effective and the school is taking steps to ensure it gains further insights into pupil and parent perspectives on this aspect. The school is improving although more effective action is needed to eradicate the remaining weaknesses and to develop the more consistent good practice needed to ensure satisfactory achievement.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- improve the quality of leadership and management to bring greater rigour to

- monitoring the work of the school – satisfactory
- ensure all safeguarding procedures are fully met – good.

External support

The local authority support has been instrumental in enabling the school to improve its use of assessment information. The school improvement partner has provided a good level of challenge to the school although more account needs to be taken of the track record of improving outcomes for pupils, when considering the school's capacity for sustained improvement. The local authority is sensibly reviewing its support to ensure the school can accelerate the rate of improvement.