

Serco Inspections
2 Wythall Green
Way
Birmingham
B47 6LW

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

Direct T 0121 683 2033
Ann.morris@serco.com



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Mr S Islam
Yew Tree Community Junior and Infant School
Yew Tree Road
Aston
Birmingham
B6 6RX

Dear Mr Islam

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 3 December 2009 and for the information which you provided before and during my visit. Please also thank the pupils that I met.

As a result of the inspection on 14 – 15 October 2008, the school was asked to:

- review the leadership structure so that there is greater clarity about leaders' responsibilities for raising standards
- ensure that teachers always expect enough of more able pupils in English and mathematics so that progress is as good in these subjects as it is in science
- increase the number of opportunities for pupils to meet and work with their peers from different backgrounds.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time the school has made good progress in making improvements and good progress in demonstrating a better capacity for sustained improvement.

Recently published unvalidated analyses of 2009 results at Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 showed that standards, whilst still low, were rising. This was most evident at Key Stage 1, where standards in comparison to similar schools in similar settings were above average. In Key Stage 2 in 2009, pupils achieved better than expected results based on their attainment at Key Stage 1, representing good progress. This improvement was most marked for pupils who are more able. A higher proportion of pupils gained a level 5 in English and mathematics, compared with previous years. The language skills of children on entry to the school are below age related expectations, with many pupils at a very early stage of speaking English. The school is successful at tackling this significant barrier to achievement and pupils make great strides in their English skills through the school. Nevertheless, for many pupils their speaking and listening skills are not yet in line with age-related expectations, although that is not for want of having a lot to say!



The standards of pupils' written work seen in two of the Year 6 classes during this inspection were in line with age-related expectations. Standards in younger classes are relatively lower, reflecting less well-developed English skills. The enthusiasm of pupils to learn, however, was consistently very high in all the classes. There is a palpable sense of energy and excitement from children as they tackle the tasks set by teachers. The quality of teaching seen was satisfactory overall, with examples very good features. The best learning took place with pupils working in small groups on tasks that matched their needs, prior knowledge, and abilities. In these lessons, the quality of planning was particularly strong. There is also emerging evidence of lesson-by-lesson planning matching task to named individual pupils, be they gifted or talented, or with a particular special educational need. The satisfactory lessons did have good features, but too much time was spent in whole-class discussions that did not involve every pupil, and in overly complicated transitions between sections of the lesson. Marking is thorough and accurate, correctly praising success, and carefully identifying points for further improvement. There are some good examples where pupils then respond to those points and teachers acknowledge the extra work, but this is not always apparent. The school is aware of these pockets of very good practice, and of the need to ensure consistency across the school.

Children behave well, and try very hard to be polite and considerate. The Year 5 pupils I met thoroughly enjoyed school, loved to learn new things, and felt safe and well-cared for. They could recount a growing number of trips and visits, and meeting pupils from other schools in very different contexts. The school has set up several links, two with other English schools, and a new link to a school in Zambia. This is a substantial undertaking, as it involves trips to the English schools, joint visits with their pupils, and hosting return visits to Yew Tree. The school is tackling the third point for improvement very well, as evidenced by the enthusiasm of its own pupils for furthering these face-to-face events.

The school reviewed and streamlined its management structure in response to the previous inspection. The documentary evidence shows a clear deployment of staff at different levels, with appropriate line-management strands. The staff know what is expected of them, at all levels, and know what is expected of other staff. The school has effectively empowered less experienced middle leaders by assigning them subject areas but has also ensured that the delivery of those areas of responsibility is monitored and evaluated by a senior member of staff. It is these senior staff who take responsibility for ensuring that standards rise as a result of new ideas and initiatives. The resultant culture is one of shared purpose, at all levels, with the enthusiasm of new leaders being supported and guided effectively by more experienced managers. The school development plan is concise and addresses the major areas for further improvement. However some target outcomes are too general to help measure incremental progress towards the end goal of 'higher standards'. The local authority is providing good support through the school improvement partner, and has an accurate and evaluative view of school development. Although not a point for improvement, the school premises, corridors,

and classrooms are very well maintained, with fresh displays of pupils' work evident at every turn. The playground is also pleasant, with a good range of activities, and spaces for children to play. Despite the inclement December weather, a couple of dedicated pupils managed to establish a cricket practice game in the midst of the general hubbub!

I hope that you have found the visit helpful in promoting improvement in your school. This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Brian Catwright".

Her Majesty's Inspector