

Serco Ltd  
Boundary House  
2 Wythall Green  
Lane  
Wythall  
Birmingham  
B47 6LW

T 08456 40 40 40  
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk  
[www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

Direct T : 0121 683 2048  
Direct F : 0121 683 2020  
Lorrie.blake@serco.com



Wednesday 30 September 2009

Mrs Diane Stygal  
Waltham Holy Cross Junior School  
Quendon Drive  
Waltham abbey  
Essex  
EN9 1LG

Dear Mrs Stygal

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools

Thank you for the help which you and the deputy headteacher gave when I inspected your school on 29th September 2009, and for the information which you provided before and during my visit. Please pass on my thanks to the staff and the pupils, who were extremely accommodating and responsive during my visits to classrooms and the school office.

Since the last inspection in September 2008, five teachers have left the school and been replaced by new staff. This term every year group has a new leader; some are undertaking this role for the first time. New subject leaders for English and mathematics have joined the leadership team.

As a result of the inspection on 15 –16th September 2008, the school was asked to:

- raise standards of writing by engaging boys more and demanding higher quality for the most able pupils
- improve the consistency and pace of learning by ensuring that teachers plan to meet the needs of all pupils in their classes
- set and carefully monitor more challenging targets for pupils' progress and for teaching.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time the school has made:

satisfactory progress in making improvements

and



satisfactory progress in demonstrating a better capacity for sustained improvement.

The school's 2008 Key Stage 2 performance data highlights most pupils' low attainment and inadequate progress. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those learning English as an additional language, however, made satisfactory progress. In 2009, the very large majority made the expected two levels of progress from Key Stage 1 in English and science. Nonetheless, standards remain low because for too long, in all year groups, teaching has not been moving pupils forward as rapidly it should. Higher expectations for the most able pupils resulted in a rise of 7% in pupils achieving the higher Level 5 in English and 3% in science. Work seen in pupils' English books shows that all pupils are writing regularly, most complete written tasks satisfactorily and most teachers are signposting them towards improvement through their marking. The proportion of pupils making expected progress in mathematics was lower than in English and science and standards slipped further by 2%. The school has already identified this as a key issue for improvement placing it as the highest priority in the school's plans for improvement.

Outcomes from the school's last inspection spurred the leadership team into concerted, timely and purposeful action to raise achievement by securing pupils' accelerated progress. A new computerised system to track pupils' progress and attainment has replaced the former manual method. This system is simple and effective; teachers find it user-friendly. All teachers and leaders are using the system to set challenging targets for pupils to aim for and to check that pupils are on track to meet them. In addition the school has adopted the national approach to assessment (APP) in reading, writing and mathematics helping teachers to make consistent and reliable judgements about national curriculum levels. The combination of these two strategies has had significant impact on accelerating pupil progress so that more pupils are reaching levels worthy of their capabilities. The school rightly evaluates that more work is needed to fine-tune assessment and develop teachers' curriculum planning so that in lessons, including those where pupils are grouped by ability, the work is adapted with precision to cater for pupils' differing abilities. The school has yet to introduce a consistent approach in supporting pupils whose learning temporarily falters so that restorative action is taken quickly.

The school's monitoring of teaching and learning is systematic and effective. For example, regular monitoring of attendance last year identified that persistent absenteeism was a barrier to some pupils' learning in Year 6. These pupils failed to make expected progress from their starting points in Year 2. Effective steps taken to rectify this have resulted in improving attendance rates this year.

During the inspection, joint lesson observations with you and the deputy highlighted the accuracy and acumen of your judgements. New leaders are currently developing their skills in monitoring the school's work so that they too can contribute to self-

evaluation. In most lessons seen, teaching was securely structured but lacked dynamism; boys and girls were suitably engaged and willing to contribute so that they learn satisfactorily. Where good teaching incorporates a variety of interesting approaches and exciting resources, pupils visibly enjoy learning and work with sustained interest, often using their initiative.

Accurate self-evaluation enables the school to identify exactly where it is now and what needs to be done to improve. Adequate plans with appropriate priorities are in place to move the school forward. However, they do not yet include clear, time-limited milestones towards success so that the rate of improvement quickens. Leaders and managers are transparent and honest about the school's satisfactory overall effectiveness and are ambitious to improve it. Relationships between the school and the local authority are strengthening. The school is actively seeking support and advice from the local authority and other partners to promote learning.

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

Linda Killman  
Her Majesty's Inspector