

Serco
Boundary House
2, Wythall Green Way
Wythall
Birmingham
West Midlands
B47 6LW

T 0300 123 1231
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk

Direct T 0121 683 2843
Beverley.joyner@serco.com

19 March 2010

Mrs T Richardson
Acting Headteacher
St John's Church of England Primary School
Blakebrook
Kidderminster
DY11 6AP

Dear Mrs Richardson

Special measures: monitoring inspection of St John's Church of England Primary School

Following my visit with Lesley Voaden, Additional Inspector, to your school on 17 and 18 March 2010, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the second monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures in May 2009. The monitoring inspection report is attached and the main judgements are set out below.

Progress since being subject to special measures – satisfactory

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – satisfactory

Newly Qualified Teachers may 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, the Director of Children's Services for Worcestershire and the Diocesan Director of Education for Worcestershire.

Yours sincerely

Ken Buxton
Her Majesty's Inspector



Special measures: monitoring of St John's Church of England Primary School

Report from the second monitoring inspection on 17 and 18 March 2010

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the acting headteacher, deputy headteacher, assistant headteacher, the Chair of Governors, individual and groups of pupils and a representative from the local authority.

Context

Since the last monitoring visit in November 2009, the governors have appointed a substantive headteacher for the start of the summer term. Consequently, the acting headteacher will leave the school at the end of the spring term. Four classes are currently being taught by temporary supply staff, three of whom are covering for long-term absences.

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

The evidence gathered from the visit shows that the rate at which pupils are making progress has improved since the last monitoring visit. Teachers are regularly assessing pupils' attainment and monitoring pupils' progress. In most year groups, teachers in parallel classes work together well to plan activities that provide good opportunities for pupils to make progress. When pupils make most progress teachers plan clear learning objectives that focus explicitly on what pupils will learn. They also manage their lessons well so that pupils are busy and engaged throughout with activities that provide challenge and interest. In these lessons, pupils enjoy learning and are actively engaged. For example, in the two Year 6 English lessons observed pupils made very good use of their newly acquired subject specific language to answer questions confidently.

As a result of the improving quality of teaching, more pupils are working at the expected level for their age. The school's tracking systems show that the current Year 6 cohort are on track to attain levels in English, mathematics and science that are close to average.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- accelerate progress in all subjects to improve standards across the school – satisfactory.

Other relevant pupil outcomes



Pupils behave well. They are polite and have good manners. They respond well to the teachers' instructions and apply themselves diligently in lessons. In most lessons, there is a strong working ethos ensuring that pupils learn without interruption. In a minority of lessons, teachers' expectations of behaviour are not explicit enough and, as a consequence, the pace of pupils' learning slows. The staggered times for mid-morning breaks and lunch ensure that there is sufficient space on the playground for pupils to play safely. As a result, they play games together well and share the playground toys fairly.

The school encourages pupils to take a keen interest in learning about the environment and the concept of sustainability. During the monitoring inspection, the Year 3 and 4 pupils enjoyed rehearsing their play 'The Big Green Adventure', which focuses on raising awareness about the importance of recycling. In addition, the after-school 'Green Club' provides pupils with exciting opportunities to learn first-hand about nature. As a result of its efforts, the school has succeeded in being awarded its fifth international eco-school green flag award.

The school's continuing drive to raise pupils' attendance levels are making a positive difference. Working closely in partnership with local schools, a common policy regarding requests for holiday absence has been introduced. In addition, the publication of a leaflet explaining the impact of poor attendance on pupils' education is designed to raise families' awareness about the importance of regular attendance. Although attendance is currently 95%, which is average when compared to the national figures, the trend shows steady improvement.

The effectiveness of provision

The quality of teaching seen during the monitoring visit was variable, although there are some improvements since the last monitoring visit. More good lessons and a small number of outstanding lessons were observed. However, a small number of inadequate lessons were also observed. The quality of teaching is stronger in some year groups than others and better in some classes than others. In the better quality lessons, teachers plan in detail for the different ability groups. Their plans also include precise instructions for supporting adults, enabling them to contribute fully to the lesson's objectives. Teachers also make clear what they expect pupils to achieve and create a working atmosphere that is conducive to learning. The outstanding lessons were fast moving with pupils being guided skilfully through a series of learning activities that both interested and engaged them. The teachers made excellent use of technology to both exemplify relevant learning points and to captivate pupils. In addition, they also maximised opportunities to emphasise particular points of interest and to determine pupils' progress. These lessons concluded by skilfully drawing together what learning had occurred through targeted use of focused questions. A number of factors were behind the less successful lessons. The principal reasons being that the lesson plans did not explain clearly enough what pupils would learn, too much time was given to teacher input and there was an over-reliance on open-ended activities that did not take sufficient



account of pupils' different abilities. As a result, pupils in these lessons made insufficient progress.

The introduction of a whole-school marking policy has been embedded successfully into teachers' everyday practice. Pupils appreciate the greater quality of feedback they receive. They recognise that teachers' comments help them know how well they have performed and how they might improve their work. Some pupils still say that they find it difficult to read teachers' handwriting. This is often because these comments are written in an adult style, which is not always an appropriate model for primary pupils.

Teachers are increasingly planning lessons that build on pupils' prior learning. They are also finding opportunities to make the curriculum relevant and interesting for pupils by making links between subjects. For example, Year 4 pupils enjoyed learning to use rulers and protractors in their mathematics lesson by drawing scale plans of rooms for a Roman villa that they had studied as part of their history project. As teachers see the benefits of this approach, they are increasingly planning opportunities for pupils to use their knowledge, understanding and skills between subjects.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- improve the quality of teaching by raising teachers' expectations, increasing the pace of learning and the level of challenge for all pupils – satisfactory
- ensure that the curriculum meets the needs of all pupils and builds effectively on what pupils have done so that progress is accelerated – satisfactory.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The school is in a transitional period as the change of headteacher takes place. Despite this imminent development, the school's leaders have focused successfully on maintaining the rate of improvement. The school's improvement plan is being used well to drive change and focus attention on relevant priorities. For example, a key objective is to raise the quality of teaching. To do so, senior leaders monitor the quality of lessons regularly and use the information gathered to prepare individual action plans for staff. These plans provide the focus for the support teachers receive. Recent initiatives, such as the regular monitoring of pupils' performance, have already had a positive impact as the majority of teachers are assessing pupils' attainment with increasing accuracy. Subject leaders' contribution to the school's development is variable. Some have risen well to the challenge of supporting and enabling staff to develop their expertise, but others are less influential.

The school's procedures for monitoring pupils' progress are developing. Analysis of the data shows that the proportion of pupils on track to meet age-related expectations is increasing. However, some inaccuracies remain in using the



information to set appropriate targets for pupils to achieve. In addition, the school's current arrangements for analysing the performance of groups are not fully developed.

The governing body are monitoring the school's performance regularly. Governors have taken on individual responsibilities to lead the monitoring and evaluation of progress being made. However, their plans to be more proactive have not developed fully and consequently, they rely heavily on reports they receive to hold the school to account. Safeguarding procedures are established but the information held needs to be compiled into a single record to ensure full compliance. Similarly, governors have not ensured that all statutory requirements are being met as the school profile is currently out of date.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- improve the quality of leadership, including monitoring and evaluation, at all levels so that there is a clear basis for planning improvements and effective strategies to ensure they are implemented – satisfactory.

External support

The local authority's high quality support is continuing to have an influential impact on the school's improvement priorities. Educational advisers work closely with individual teachers to coach them and their input has made a strong contribution to strengthening the overall quality of teaching. They are also supporting members of the senior leadership team to develop the skills needed to engage and contribute fully to the school's improvement initiatives. Their close involvement includes monitoring the impact of their work regularly and identifying where further effort is needed. Their reports provide a detailed and accurate analysis of progress achieved.

Priority for further improvement

- Ensure that the school has the capability to analyse assessment data so that accurate targets can be set and the findings can be used to accelerate pupils' progress.
- Ensure that there is full compliance with all statutory requirements and that information gathered through recruitment and vetting checks are compiled in a single central record.