

Serco Inspections  
Boundary House  
2 Wythall Green Way  
Middle Lane  
BIRMINGHAM  
West Midlands  
B47 6LW

T 0300 123 1231  
Text Phone: 0161 6188524  
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk  
[www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)



Monday 8 March 2010

Ms Carole Fenton  
Palmers Cross Primary School  
Windermere Road  
Tettenhall  
Wolverhampton  
WV6 9DF

Dear Ms Fenton

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on Friday 5 March 2010, for the time you gave to our telephone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during my visit. Thanks also to the pupils and staff who gave so generously and willingly of their time to talk with me.

Since the last inspection there has been a fall in the school roll. The number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities has risen. In some year groups, for example in the current Year 6, the proportion of pupils with special needs is very high. In 2009 the number of pupils joining and leaving the school throughout the year was high. Following the last inspection the headteacher who was then absent has returned to school.

As a result of the inspection on 5 March 2008, the school was asked to

- Raise standards in writing.
- Ensure teachers' marking provides suitable guidance for pupils to improve their work.
- Make better use of ICT to improve pupils communication, research and exploration skills.
- Ensure that pupils are clear about their targets and what they have to do to reach them.

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

satisfactory progress in making improvements

and



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satisfactory progress in demonstrating a better capacity for sustained improvement.

Effective measures implemented since the last inspection have begun to accelerate pupils' achievement in writing. Overall, most pupils make satisfactory progress in writing but there are variations remaining within particular year groups. For example, in 2009, the school's challenging target for the number of Year 4 pupils to meet the age expected standard in writing was not met. Detailed analysis shows that this reflected a significant number of higher achieving pupils leaving the school during that year and lower achieving pupils joining half way through that year. The school took decisive action as this group entered Year 5 and the interventions put in place have impacted on raising achievement in writing. In the latest tests, Year 6 pupils were below average in writing, but results were better than in the previous two years. Overall, test results in 2009 show an improvement in Year 6 in English and mathematics compared with the previous year. Boys continue to lag behind girls, but this reflects the higher proportion of boys than girls with special educational needs and/or disabilities within the school. In respect of Year 2 pupils in 2009 the school met its challenging target in writing for the pupils who started out in Year 1 and continued through to the end of Year 2. However, a few Year 2 pupils joining from other schools having completed their statutory assessments were included in the school's data and this impacted on the overall target met in writing, which was below that set at the start of the year.

The school's data shows that current Year 6 pupils make at least satisfactory progress in writing. Standards are now steadily rising. Indicators suggest that most are on target to make the expected rate of progress and the school is close to reaching the national average standard in English. However, overall standards are below the national average because of the high proportion of pupils with special educational needs in the current Year 6. Pupils in all year groups now make at least satisfactory progress in reading, writing and mathematics. In the current Year 2 and 5 groups the school's data shows significant improvements because of the success of the strategies put in place by the headteacher have had on raising achievement. The school's data indicates that the proportion of current Year 2 pupils on target to reach the age expected standard in reading, writing and mathematics is significantly higher than last year. Teaching of writing throughout the school is at least satisfactory, but pupils are not always sufficiently involved in assessing their own writing and identifying for themselves what they need to do to improve. A range of strategies including one-to-one structured teaching on the use of connectives and targeted support for small groups focusing on modelling good writing contribute successfully to raising pupils' achievement. Standards in writing are improving across the school with an increased number of pupils in each year group on target to make the expected level of progress compared with last year.

There has been good progress in marking of pupils' English work as teachers give clear and helpful guidance to pupils on how to improve their writing. This is followed through and pupils' written work is improving as a result. However, marking in other subjects remains inconsistent and does not give pupils sufficient guidance on improving their work. Satisfactory improvement has been made in raising pupils' achievement in ICT since the last inspection, particularly in the resource base for pupils with complex speech and language



difficulties. However, by Year 6 pupils are not sufficiently confident in control and modelling skills reflecting a lack of resources and teacher knowledge in these areas of ICT. Pupils now know their targets in English and mathematics and what they need to do to reach their targets.

The headteacher has benefitted from the high quality support she has received from the local authority in bringing about improvement. The additional funding, particularly in a school with a falling roll, has enabled the headteacher and governors to sustain the staffing required for small group work. Consultant literacy support has been effectively targeted to support teachers in improving their teaching skills and raising achievement. Self-evaluation is a strong feature and the headteacher uses data analysis effectively to take decisive action to raise achievement. Based on the success of actions taken by the headteacher on her return since the last inspection to tackle staffing issues and raise achievement the capacity for sustained improvement is satisfactory. The interventions put in place and support given by the headteacher in the current Year 2 class are impacting significantly on raising achievement in reading, writing and mathematics. Focussed interventions in Years 5 and Year 6 have significantly raised achievement in English. The school's data shows that it is on course, this year, to exceed the challenging targets it set itself for raising achievement in Year 2 and Year 6 in reading, writing and mathematics. However, although the achievement gap is narrowing year on year standards remain below the national average by the end of Year 6.

Very effective management systems and procedures are in place to ensure pupils are secure and safe. At the time of the monitoring visit, child protection procedures fully met government requirements. There is a robust safe staff recruitment policy in place. Risk assessments, including those for pupils' medical and behavioural needs, are detailed and thorough.

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  
Jeffery Plumb  
Additional Inspector



