

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)



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Mr P Moore  
Northfield Road Primary School  
Northfield Road  
Netherton  
Dudley  
DY2 9ER

Dear Mr Moore

Ofsted monitoring of schools with a notice to improve

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on Wednesday 19 May 2010 with my colleague Jeremy Spencer HMI and for the information which you provided during our visit. Please pass on our thanks to your staff, pupils and chair of governors for their help during the inspection.

Since the time of the inspection the school has made changes to the leadership of subject areas, has received a number of prestigious awards including the Princess Diana award and ECO Schools Bronze award, and a number of staff have had long term absences which are ongoing.

As a result of the inspection on 12 October 2009, the school was asked to:

- raise attainment in writing and mathematics by:
  - providing opportunities for pupils to write more extensively and improve spelling and punctuation
  - providing more challenging problem-solving tasks in numeracy
- improve the quality of teaching by:
  - sharing best practice across classes ,ensuring that teachers pose questions that extend pupils' thinking and plan tasks that are matched more closely to pupils' abilities
- ensure that the leadership team's evaluations are robust enough to provide clear priorities for improvement that accelerate pupils' progress across the school
- improve attendance rates and reduce the rate of persistent absence with the cooperation and support of parents and carers.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time the school is making good progress in addressing the issues for improvement and in raising the pupils' achievement.

Standards in English have risen and the school's assessments indicate that whilst Year 6 pupils are still attaining below average they have improved their writing skills. Books show that their spelling and punctuation are now better and also that staff have concentrated on these elements across all subjects. As one pupil said 'Work in all subjects has to be as good as in literacy.' Pupils are also well supported in broadening their experiences so they are better able to write with imagination and flair. The local authority adviser has been very supportive and enabled the school to improve practice.

In mathematics standards have also risen although not to the extent as those in English. This is because many pupils had low calculation skills and were not immediately able to take on the challenges of problem solving until these had been rectified. There were also changes in subject leadership and unforeseen delays to the local authority support. However the school is quickly making up for lost time and now has a comprehensive programme of opportunities for pupils to problem solve by investigating and reasoning within numeracy lessons. The improved questioning skills employed by staff across all subjects has ensured pupils are better able to articulate appropriate responses to carefully formulated questions and move forwards in their learning.

The school's accurate and comprehensive records show that progress is good across the year, although for the present Year 6 pupils is only satisfactory during the key stage as they have had to make up for previous weak progress. In other years progress is good and the school records indicate that Year 5 pupils are presently attaining higher standards than has previously been seen at this time. A major reason for increased progress within lessons is that the quality of teaching has improved. A comprehensive programme of coaching and mentoring, linked to an accurate evaluation of the quality of individuals, has ensured staff, both teachers and teaching assistants, have had effective support and improved their pedagogical skills. Improved planning has also ensured work is now well matched to the needs of pupils. This is also supported by setting pupils for some subjects.

At the time of the inspection the school had introduced a program of monitoring and evaluation in six week blocks. Unfortunately the full impact of this was not evident at the time because it was still in its early days. Leaders now have an accurate appraisal of the quality of teaching and also the new student tracking system is effective in identifying any underperformance. Evaluations have been effective in identifying appropriate support for both staff and pupils and to bring about improvements. Strong work with pupils, parents and carers to ensure attendance has risen to close to the critical 94% mark and there has been a significant reduction in the proportion of pupils who take a lot of time off school. The school has been adversely affected by the poor weather in the winter when it remained open whilst other schools were closed and consequently attendance was particularly low.

The local authority (LA) action plan is appropriate and is effective in supporting the school overcome its difficulties. Subject advisers and LA inspectors have been supportive as well as challenging to ensure the school remains on track to carry on its improvements. Good support has also been provided by an ex-headteacher acting as a leadership and management consultant.

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

Michael Smith  
Her Majesty's Inspector