

Serco Inspections
Cedar House
21 William Street
Edgbaston
Birmingham
B15 1LH

Ofsted
T 0300 123 1231
Text Phone: 0161 6188524
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk

Serco
Direct T 0121 683 3888



13 July 2011

Mr Madsen
Thomas Bullock Primary School
Pound Green
Shipdham
Thetford
IP25 7LF

Dear Mr Madsen

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools: monitoring inspection of Thomas Bullock Primary School

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 12 July 2011, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during the inspection. Please thank the Chair of Governors and senior leaders who found time to meet with me.

As a result of the inspection on 11 March 2010, the school was asked to address the most important areas for improvement which are set out in the annex to this letter. Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time the school has made inadequate progress in making improvements and satisfactory progress in demonstrating a better capacity for sustained improvement.

Since the last inspection, a newly qualified teacher has been appointed in Key Stage 1 and a new leader of the Early Years Foundation Stage will join the school next term. A new headteacher is providing the school with much needed stability following a period of significant turbulence caused by the absence of senior leaders. His evaluation of the school's performance has informed revised plans for improvement that include challenging targets to raise achievement and improve the quality of teaching. He and his team of senior leaders are demonstrating that they have the capacity to drive further improvements but more time is needed before the full impact of their work is shown in higher standards achieved by pupils.

Improved teaching and better deployment of teaching assistants in the joint Year 1 and Year 2 class is enabling the majority of pupils to progress satisfactorily. This year, the percentage of pupils that attained expected levels in writing improved and a higher proportion of more able pupils attained higher level 3. Results in mathematics remained above average but fewer pupils attained Level 3. Writing frames and word banks are used well to help pupils to plan a beginning, middle and



end to their stories, but more able pupils are not encouraged to begin writing promptly which restricts their creativity and progress.

The good start pupils make in Key Stage 1 is not built upon in Key Stage 2 because the quality of teaching is too variable, and at times, it is ineffective. The school's current assessment data show that some pupils continue to underachieve in Years 3 and 4, particularly in writing and mathematics. Better teaching later in the key stage helps to accelerate progress but not enough to overcome a previous under-achievement caused during the period of uncertainty last year. Results in this year's national tests show that attainment in mathematics has improved but declined in writing, and the percentage of Year 6 pupils attaining the expected levels in English and in mathematics remains well below the Government's floor targets. Writing remains a common weakness across the school mainly because pupils are not given sufficient opportunities to practice writing creatively under test conditions or to assess the quality of their work by comparing it with writing matched to national curriculum levels.

The new headteacher has prioritised improving the quality of teaching. Sharing good practice and regular lesson monitoring has added greater consistency in the quality of lesson planning and increased opportunities for pupils to talk together and contribute to class discussion. Most teachers use interactive whiteboards well to actively engage pupils in learning, and occasionally pupils are encouraged to assess how well they are doing. However, observations carried out jointly with the headteacher revealed that inconsistencies remain. At times, teachers' low expectations mean that some of the more able pupils remain insufficiently challenged. Some teaching assistants are deployed effectively but others continue to carry out tasks that are unrelated to directly promoting pupils' learning.

Senior managers collate a wealth of assessment data to monitor the progress of individual pupils, but this is not shared with them so that they know how well they are doing or what next steps they need to take to improve their work. Teachers do not make regular use of this data to set pupils challenging targets or plan learning suited to their different abilities. The need to address other priorities means that the leadership of foundation subjects remain under-developed. Governors ensure that safeguarding arrangements are secure. They have aided the school's strategic development by appointing new school leaders, but their limited understanding of performance data and involvement in self-evaluation means that their role in monitoring the school's performance is minimal.

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

Yours sincerely

John Mitcheson
Her Majesty's Inspector

September 2010



Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in March 2010

- Raise attainment in writing and mathematics across the school, particularly for more-able pupils by:
 - using assessment information more effectively to provide sufficient challenge.
- Ensure teaching is consistently good or better, especially in Key Stage 1, by:
 - giving pupils clear guidance about the next steps in their learning
 - enhancing the role of teaching assistants during lesson introductions
 - sharing existing good practice across the school.
- Increase the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
 - ensuring governors give renewed strategic direction to the school
 - strengthening further the roles of all leaders in rapidly driving forward improvement.