

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 2888



4 October 2012

Mr Clive Richardson
Headteacher
Bishop Alexander Primary and Nursery School
Wolsey Road
Newark
NG24 2BQ

Dear Mr Richardson

Notice to improve: monitoring inspection of Bishop Alexander Primary and Nursery School

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 3 October, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during my visit. Please pass on my thanks to the staff, as well as the representatives of the local authority and governing body with whom I spoke, for their time and courtesy. I would also like to thank the pupils for making me feel so welcome.

Since the school's last inspection, there have been some staffing changes, including at middle management level.

As a result of the inspection on 26 January 2012, 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 is making good progress in addressing the issues for improvement and in raising the pupils' achievement.

Lessons observed jointly with senior leaders, as well as a scrutiny of pupils' work, confirm that progress has accelerated since the previous inspection. New systems for monitoring teaching and learning are more rigorous than previously and are making an important contribution to these improvements. Challenging targets have been set by senior leaders, and robust assessment and tracking systems indicate that these improvements in pupils' progress are expected to secure an upturn in their attainment.

The quality of teaching has improved significantly since the last inspection. Teachers are working productively with senior leaders to improve their practice and the

proportion of good teaching is increasing. Pupils report that they are enjoying their learning better because lessons are more interesting, more interactive and their tasks are generally well matched to their abilities. As a result, pupils demonstrate good behaviour and enthusiasm for learning, which are contributing to their better progress. All teachers have been involved in training to ensure that calculation skills are taught progressively throughout the school. In a Year 6 lesson observed, pupils demonstrated that they could use an appropriate range of division calculation methods and enjoyed challenging opportunities to select methods when solving problems. There are good strategies in place for supporting pupils in Key Stage 2 with phonics. Well-focused, daily phonics sessions, as well as more careful matching of books to pupils' abilities, are having a significant impact on developing their confidence in spelling and reading unfamiliar words, and in creating enthusiasm for reading. Planning for the Early Years Foundation Stage indicates that teachers skilfully plan a wide range of appropriate and exciting activities for all children, including boys, to develop their early reading and writing skills.

Assessment information is being used effectively to inform planning and track the pupils' progress. Target books are used successfully and pupils are beginning to have a clearer understanding of what they need to do to improve their work. A new marking policy has been implemented consistently throughout the school and is beginning to provide pupils with helpful guidance to show how they can improve their work. However, this guidance is not sufficiently well linked to pupils' targets.

Since the previous inspection, senior leaders have worked with great determination to remove the causes for concern. Throughout the school, there is a clear sense of purpose and direction. School leaders are supporting teachers effectively in improving their skills by systematically monitoring their work and giving them constructive feedback. Senior leaders set high expectations and staff understand that nothing less than consistently good teaching will be tolerated. Teachers have been open to and willing to change their practice as a result of professional development opportunities, including the sharing of best practice within the school. Senior leaders carefully track pupils' progress over time and are using this information effectively to plan support programmes for underachieving pupils in order to close the gaps in learning for different groups of pupils across the school. The school priority plan is clearly focused on tackling the areas for improvement identified in the previous inspection. The recently introduced high-impact plans are successfully enabling senior leaders to share improvement planning regularly with all staff and ensuring rapid progress in the identified areas for improvement.

Members of the governing body are actively involved at all levels of school life, including monitoring the impact of the school's work. Arrangements for keeping pupils safe meet requirements.

The local authority's action plan for supporting the school is fit for purpose. It provides an effective means for evaluating the school's progress. The local authority

has brokered in effective external support which the leadership team has used well to improve its evaluation of teaching and pupils' progress.

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

Dorothy Bathgate
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in January 2012

- Raise pupils' achievement, particularly in Key Stage 2, by improving the quality of teaching across the school, so that at least 85% is consistently good or better by March 2013, by:
 - improving consistency in teachers' implementation of the school's calculation policy in mathematics in order to improve pupils' numeracy skills
 - ensuring that lower-attaining pupils in Key Stage 2 have access to daily phonic sessions which are pitched accurately to meet their learning needs
 - matching reading books more closely to pupils' abilities in Key Stage
 - increasing the engagement of boys during both indoor and outdoor activities to develop their reading and writing skills in the Early Years Foundation Stage
 - ensuring greater consistency in the quality of teachers' marking and their assessment of pupils' work and learning.

- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
 - increasing the proportion of time available for senior leaders to monitor, evaluate and improve the work of the school
 - increasing the frequency of formal lesson observations undertaken by senior leaders, and provide more opportunities for colleagues across the school to see best practice
 - analysing assessment information about pupils' progress in greater depth, to determine whether gaps in their learning and achievement are closing between different groups of pupils across the school
 - ensuring that all action plans are shared with staff and clearly outline who will monitor and evaluate each action, with clear milestones and timescales from which to measure progress.

- Improve pupils' behaviour by ensuring that all teachers deal effectively with any occasional low-level disruption in lessons.