

Serco
Boundary House
Wythall Green Road
Wythall
B47 6LW
T 08456 40 40 40
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk



26 November 2009

Mrs L Hardman
Bishop Wood Junior School
Frogmore Street
Tring
Hertfordshire
HP23 5AU

Dear Mrs Hardman

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 24–25 November 2009, and for the information which you provided before and during my visit. During the inspection, I visited seven lessons, examined various documents, checked a sample of pupils' mathematics books and met with staff, pupils, parents, governors and a local authority representative. Please pass on my thanks to everyone for their help during the inspection.

Since the last inspection, some experienced teachers have left the school, including the former special educational needs coordinator. There has also been a review of leadership and management responsibilities. As a result, there is a new subject-leader for mathematics and two teachers share the special educational needs coordinator role.

As a result of the inspection on 25 September 2008, the school was asked to:

- Raise standards in English, mathematics and science.
- Improve the quality of teaching, particularly in mathematics, in order to help pupils make consistently good progress.
- Ensure that parents are more closely involved in, and kept abreast of, the progress their children make, particularly those with individual education plans.

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

satisfactory progress in making improvements.

and

satisfactory progress in demonstrating a better capacity for sustained improvement.

When pupils' above average prior attainment and other contextual factors are taken into account, their progress is satisfactory in all three core subjects. Last year, pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities made good progress. This reflects the closer monitoring of their learning. Individual education plans are now reviewed regularly with pupils and their parents.

The school has successfully addressed some of the areas for improvement. In the 2009 national tests, standards improved in English and science. The proportion of pupils reaching Level 5 in English was well above the national average. Every pupil reached at least Level 4 in science, and two thirds reached Level 5. Both of these improvements can be traced back to actions taken by the school, such as an intervention programme in English and a more active approach to science, which improved both teaching and learning in scientific enquiry. Changes were also made in mathematics, but these did not result in better test results. For this reason, the main focus of this monitoring visit was the teaching and learning of mathematics

The school improvement plan shows that the school is taking appropriate action to improve provision for information and communication technology and to improve standards of writing. Naturally, attention is also being given to mathematics. However, there were no lesson observations undertaken of mathematics in the summer term. It is important that the senior leadership team maintains the drive for improvement in mathematics.

The school's own lesson observations include many useful points about teaching and learning, but are not sufficiently focused on subject issues. However, the joint lesson observations that I undertook with you and the mathematics coordinator showed me that you both are able to identify the strengths of teaching and to pinpoint specific ways that mathematics lesson in particular might be improved. We agreed that future lesson observations should provide teachers with more examples of specific things that they did, or did not do, that made a difference to learning.

Of the seven lessons I observed, five were good, including four good mathematics lessons. The school therefore has some effective teachers, who present good role models. Many of the teachers I spoke to were able to reflect on their own teaching, and showed a growing understanding of how to teach mathematics well. Even so, the lesson observations and my survey of pupils' books raised some points that the school might like to consider.

For example, I saw some good examples of teachers providing 'hands-on' resources, like interlocking cubes and visual representations of mathematical concepts, but they are not yet used consistently well in all classes. I also noted that pupils' areas of weakness are not always followed up in a timely fashion. In some cases where a pupil has not quite mastered a topic, it would be sensible to sort out the problem

through individual attention and additional practice, rather than allowing the pupil to remain in a confused state until the next time the topic comes round. The small group of parents that I spoke to would be pleased if their children were given extra homework in such situations.

The school provides useful guidance to teachers on the teaching of calculation. We discussed how teachers might work together to agree similar guidance on other areas of mathematics. Teachers are increasingly sharing ideas and experiences, and developing curriculum guidance would be one way of improving their subject expertise. The school has already instituted regular liaison between Year 3 teachers and their Year 2 colleagues in the main partner infant school.

One of the topics that we discussed during the visit was the use of pupil tracking data as a management tool. At present, termly assessments are made of pupils' attainment in key subjects. The data is currently used effectively to identify pupils who are making less progress than expected, so they can be helped to catch up. The school has just acquired national data that will allow it to compare the progress of pupils against those in other schools. However, the school has not made the most of its own data to analyse the average progress of classes and groups of pupils. For example, the data has the potential to show whether the average progress being made in each year-group is better or worse than in previous years, and therefore whether or not the school improvement plan is working.

During the inspection, I checked the school's single central record of the identity, qualifications and criminal records checks made on adults who have regular contact with the pupils. The school was able to demonstrate that all the necessary checks had been made.

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

Stephen Abbott
Her Majesty's Inspector