

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](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

**Serco**  
**Direct T** 0121 683 3888

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Mrs Angela Savill  
Acting headteacher  
Hamstel Junior School  
Hamstel Road  
Southend-on-Sea  
SS2 4PQ

Dear Mrs Savill

### **Notice to improve: monitoring inspection of Hamstel Junior School**

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 28 September 2011 and for the information which you provided during the inspection. Please pass on my thanks to the pupils, members of the governing body and local authority representatives for answering my questions so patiently.

Since it was inspected in February 2011, the school has experienced a number of staffing changes. The Year 4 group leader left at Easter and was immediately replaced. The inclusion manager retired and a special educational needs coordinator was appointed for the start of the summer term. The headteacher retired in April 2011 and you took up your post as acting headteacher in May. Two new learning support assistants were appointed in May. A Year 5 teacher left partway through the year and was replaced by a job-share arrangement. Three other teachers left at the end of the summer term. Two other members of staff are on long-term leave, one through sickness and the other through maternity. In September, four new teachers and a learning mentor took up their posts.

As a result of the inspection on 3 and 4 February 2011, 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 satisfactory progress in addressing the issues for improvement and in raising the pupils' achievement.

Pupils who completed Key Stage 2 in 2011 caught up a lot of ground in their final year, making their progress since Key Stage 1 satisfactory overall and the best for some years. However, because they had a lower starting point, attainment for the

2011 cohort was slightly lower than in the previous two years. In the other year groups, standards were also below average, despite better progress last year.

The learning and progress of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is improving, but is still below expectations. The progress of the small number of pupils for whom English is an additional language varies from year to year. For those completing Key Stage 2 in 2011, it was satisfactory.

The modest improvement in pupils' achievement over the last year has largely been driven by the initiatives established prior to the last inspection by the deputy headteachers following their appointment in September 2010. They introduced greater rigour into lesson observation and improved the monitoring of pupils' progress. While this work continued in the weeks following the inspection, progress in tackling the new issues that had been identified was hampered by the continuing ill health of the then headteacher. Little was accomplished in the three months prior to your appointment in May, partly because the deputy headteachers were not empowered to take the decisive steps that were needed and partly because the support brokered by the local authority took some time to arrange.

Since May, a great deal has been achieved under your leadership in preparation for further improvement. The school is benefiting from your good understanding of the strategies needed to sustain improvements in the quality of provision and pupil outcomes. Fundamental to this has been the restructuring of leadership and management. Each member of the senior leadership team now has a clear set of responsibilities. Subject leaders and year group leaders now have a much bigger role in monitoring and improving provision and every subject is now covered by the expanded team of subject leaders. A new monitoring and evaluation policy is nearly ready to be considered by the governing body.

As a result of these changes, teachers now get recognition of what they do well and guidance on how to improve further. They are encouraged to observe their colleagues' good practice. In addition, all teachers have had training to improve the quality and accuracy of their assessment, and to use assessment data to plan work at different levels to match pupils' prior attainment and meet their needs.

The governing body has also taken action to improve its effectiveness. Each governor now has defined links with the school, for example with particular subjects or aspects of the school's work. Training has been arranged with a partner school to improve governors' skills in using data to hold senior leaders to account.

During the summer term, the Year 3 team and the special educational needs coordinator worked closely with the neighbouring infant school to improve transition

and progression for pupils. They now have a much clearer understanding of the teaching, learning and assessment styles used in Key Stage 1. They have subsequently modified the Year 3 programme and their own teaching styles to make the transition much smoother for pupils.

The school has improved the provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities by developing individual education plans for each of them. Teachers and learning support assistants have had training from the special educational needs coordinator and senior staff, well supported by an advanced skills teacher from another school. This has brought three main benefits. Learning support assistants have a much clearer understanding of their roles, both in helping pupils to learn and in recording assessment information. Teachers now plan more effectively to address pupils' individual needs and give clearer guidance to the learning support assistants. In addition, pupils receive 'precision teaching' sessions to tackle specific problems or to fill gaps in their learning.

There is now a teacher with responsibility for pupils learning English as an additional language. She is receiving good support from a local authority adviser and is planning a number of improvements. Already, she has audited the languages spoken in pupils' homes and has forged links with her opposite number in the infant school.

The local authority's statement of action meets requirements. There have been some complications due to restructuring of the school improvement service, but the local authority is committed to providing continuity of leadership for the school. External support, much of it brokered by the local authority, has been effective since May.

In summary, initiatives that predate the last inspection brought about a modest improvement in overall achievement by the end of the summer term, although progress remains weaker for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. The school is working hard to make up for time lost in the spring term. The changes made since May are bringing about clear improvements in provision this term that now need to be consolidated and sustained. It is too early to judge the impact of these later changes on pupil outcomes.

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

Stephen Abbott  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Annex**

### **The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in February 2011**

- Improve the effectiveness of the leadership and management provided by the headteacher and governing body by:
  - developing their understanding of successful management strategies to sustain improvements in the quality of provision and pupil outcomes
  - increasing the governing body's understanding of how to analyse assessment data in order to hold the school's leadership to account for its performance.
- Raise standards and increase the rate at which pupils make progress in their learning by:
  - improving the quality of teaching and the use of assessment to a consistently good level
  - ensuring better continuity of learning for pupils in Year 3 by strengthening links with the infant school so that teachers' understanding of how pupils' early literacy and numeracy skills can be developed
  - developing teachers' understanding of how to provide matched work and challenge for more-able pupils
  - developing teachers' understanding of how to address the needs of pupils learning English as an additional language.
- Improve provision and outcomes for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities by:
  - ensuring that teachers have a thorough understanding of pupils' learning difficulties and how these are to be addressed
  - ensuring that teachers provide precise direction for teaching assistants in their support for these pupils
  - conducting rigorous and regular monitoring of the quality of provision and pupil outcomes.