

Tribal
1-4 Portland Square
BRISTOL
BS2 8RR

T 0300 123 1231
Text Phone: 0161 6188524 **Direct T** 0845 123 6001
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk **Direct F** 0117 315 0430
www.ofsted.gov.uk **Direct email:** rebecca.jackson@tribalgroup.com

13 December 2010

Ms C Milton
Interim Headteacher
St Mary Redcliffe CE VC Primary School
Windmill Close
Bristol
BS3 4DP

Dear Ms Milton

Special measures: monitoring inspection of St Mary Redcliffe CE VC Primary School

Following my visit with Charlotte Roberson, additional inspector, to your school on 1–2 December 2010, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in May 2010. The full list of the areas for improvement which were identified during that inspection is set out in the annex to this letter. The monitoring inspection report is attached and the main judgements are set out below.

Progress since being subject to special measures - inadequate

Newly Qualified Teachers may not be appointed.

This letter and monitoring inspection report will be posted on the Ofsted website. I am copying this letter and the monitoring inspection report to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Interim Executive Board, the Diocese of Bristol and the Strategic Director, Children, Young People and Skills for Bristol.

Yours sincerely

Linda McGill
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Improve teaching and learning and the curriculum in order to accelerate pupils' progress and raise their achievement by:
 - ensuring teachers have high expectations and challenge all pupils
 - improving the balance of lessons so there is less teacher talk and more pupil involvement in practical activities
 - providing activities that engage and motivate pupils.

- Improve the use of assessment information so that teachers can take responsibility for the progress of pupils in their care by:
 - assessing pupils' attainment levels accurately
 - making sure staff use assessment information to tailor activities to meet the full range of pupils' needs.

- Embed ambition and accelerate the pace of school improvement by ensuring that leaders and managers at all levels, together with the governing body, play a full part in:
 - monitoring the school's work, especially teaching and learning
 - identifying improvement priorities
 - evaluating the impact of their actions to raise attainment and achievement.

- Raise attendance.

Special measures: monitoring of St Mary Redcliffe Church of England Primary School

Report from the first monitoring inspection on 1–2 December 2010

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the interim headteacher, other senior and middle leaders and the learning mentor, the Chair of the Interim Executive Board and the School Improvement Partner. Informal discussions took place with pupils. Sixteen parts of lessons were observed.

Context

The school has experienced several changes in leadership since the inspection in May. The governing body has been replaced by an Interim Executive Board, which started its work in September. The substantive headteacher has been on sick leave since the middle of September and her post has been covered in an acting capacity by the deputy headteacher, the headteacher of the partner school and, for the past four weeks, an interim headteacher whose substantive post is headteacher of another school in Bristol. In addition, one class teacher has been absent on sick leave since early September and has now resigned. The class has been taught by several supply teachers over the past three months, but the situation is now more stable. One member of the senior leadership team left the school at the end of the summer term to take up a promoted post.

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning

Since the last inspection, the unvalidated results of national tests and assessments for pupils aged seven and 11 have become available. Assessments at the end of Key Stage 1 showed that pupils' attainment overall was well below the national average. Results in reading were higher than those in writing and mathematics, but were nonetheless below the national figure. Results at Key Stage 2 were below average, but not significantly so, and as at Key Stage 1, performance in English was stronger than in mathematics. Low attainment in mathematics is a feature in both key stages. Observations in lessons and the school's assessment information indicate that in all year groups a substantial proportion of pupils are working below the levels expected for their age, and that there are variations from class to class and one year group to another.

The added value by the school across Key Stage 2 was positive. From their very low starting points in Year 3, the pupils caught up somewhat in English, but not very much in mathematics.

Steps have been taken to strengthen assessment procedures in order to provide a clear baseline from which pupils' progress can be measured. The school has adopted the local authority's recommended system for collecting and analysing assessment information and two sets of data have been collated. However, a recent review carried out by the local authority raised doubts about the accuracy of the assessment information. Senior staff agree that there are still inconsistencies in the teachers' confidence and ability to assess attainment accurately in reading and mathematics. This means that, some six months after the school's inspection, there is no secure means of judging whether the efforts being made to accelerate pupils' progress are working or not.

In most lessons observed during this inspection, pupils made satisfactory or occasionally good progress in their learning. However, in about a quarter of lessons, progress was inadequate, because of weaknesses in teaching such as the provision of poorly differentiated and undemanding tasks and a lack of precision in identifying exactly what pupils are to learn during the lesson.

Other relevant pupil outcomes

On the whole, pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. They get on readily with their work and show interest in what they are doing. Behaviour can occasionally slip, particularly where the pupils are not fully engaged by what is going on in the lesson, or at changeover times where routines are not well established. The school's behaviour policy is under review at the moment, because staff and pupils have identified shortcomings in the current system. The intention is to move away from emphasising the consequences of unacceptable behaviour to reinforcing and rewarding good behaviour. During this inspection, a few members of staff, both teachers and support staff, were observed talking to pupils in ways that had the potential to lead to confrontation, rather than defusing the situation. There is a lack of consistency in staff's expectations and the way unacceptable behaviour is managed.

Levels of attendance are almost one percentage point above where they were at this time last year. Staff have worked in partnership with the education welfare service to emphasise to pupils and parents and carers the importance of regular attendance and good punctuality, with some success. The relationship between pupils' attendance levels and their attainment and progress has not yet been explored.

Progress since the last section 5 inspection on the area for improvement:

- raise attendance – satisfactory.

The effectiveness of provision

It was evident from observations in lessons that teachers have responded to advice and guidance they have received on teaching techniques, particularly those designed

to involve pupils more actively in lessons and in evaluating their own performance. For example, pupils were often asked to work in pairs to look at each other's work or discuss their thoughts on a topic. However, these positive moves did not necessarily lead to better learning, because the teachers did not ask any of the pupils to report back to the whole class what they had discovered or learned. This left the teacher unable to assess whether the pupils had actually learned what was intended. It was not clear whether the teachers did not fully understand the purpose of these techniques, or that they were unconvinced of their efficacy. In many lessons, objectives for learning are not expressed with sufficient precision to identify exactly what pupils will know, understand or be able to do at the end of the lesson. Steps have been taken to increase pupils' enthusiasm for writing by basing work around books that capture pupils' imagination, and pupils spoke with pleasure about some of the stories they were studying. However, work in pupils' books shows that worksheet-based activities, including those that require pupils to rewrite what they have read elsewhere, are still common.

Nevertheless, there are positive features in lessons. Relationship between adults and pupils are usually friendly and warm. Teachers plan tasks that take account of the range of ability in the class, although their skills in fine-tuning tasks to the needs of individuals and groups vary. In the better lessons, the teachers' enthusiasm rubs off on the pupils and the pace is crisp and purposeful. There is a good balance of active participation, listening and reflection. More effective teaching was observed in Years 4, 5 and 6. Taken overall, there is still too much variation in the quality of teaching.

As mentioned above, procedures for collecting and analysing assessment information have been strengthened. Meetings between senior leaders and class teachers to discuss pupils' progress and identify next steps have begun. This is increasing teachers' accountability for the progress of pupils in their class, but is a recent development. The school is not yet in a position to demonstrate that the improved use of assessment information is leading to better progress in pupils' learning.

The curriculum was not examined in any depth during this inspection. The school has analysed the amounts of time spent in each class on English and mathematics, which shows that variations can be quite wide from one year group to another. In one year group, for example, almost half of the day is devoted to different aspects of English. It is clear that there is no consensus as to how the curriculum should be structured in terms of blocks of time. During lesson observations, pupils frequently were withdrawn from the classroom for other activities or additional support, missing out on what the rest of the class was learning. This practice needs to be reviewed to gauge the extent of removal from class and how this benefits the pupils, what they are missing and how they are enabled to catch-up.

Progress since the last section 5 inspection on the areas for improvement:

- improve teaching, learning and the curriculum - inadequate
- improve the use of assessment information – inadequate.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The continuing uncertainty about leadership at the highest level is having a negative impact on the school's progress out of special measures. The interim headteacher has made a strong impact in a short space of time. She is astute and understands the root causes of the school's problems, and her positive and honest approach is encouraging others to adopt a similar attitude. However, it is not clear how long she will remain at the school and so any improvements remain fragile.

Aside from this, there are important barriers to improvement that will have to be tackled if the pace of change is to accelerate sufficiently. Efforts need to be directed at those aspects that require it most, rather than being spread widely. To this end, the interim headteacher has redrafted the school's improvement plan so that it focuses on the key aspects of teaching, learning and pupils' behaviour that will lay the foundations for further improvement. Another major barrier is the lack of strong leadership at other levels. In the past, subject and other leaders have not been involved in monitoring and evaluating performance in their areas of responsibility, contributing to whole-school self-evaluation and driving improvement as part of a strategic plan. This situation has improved, but there is still a long way to go before a positive culture of constructive self-criticism, ensuing development and accountability is embedded. Finally, the staffing structure is fragmented and complex. It does not meet the pupils' needs for stability and continuity in the classroom. Staff morale is fragile.

The Interim Executive Board has got off to a good start. Its members are clearly committed to the school and meet once each fortnight to review and discuss important aspects of the school's work. They are involved in initiatives such as the review of the behaviour policy and, importantly, in meeting groups of parents and carers. The Chair of the Interim Executive Board knows that as well as fulfilling the role of holding the school to account, the Board must be able to demonstrate that its actions are having a positive impact on the school's progress.

Progress since the last section 5 inspection on the area for improvement:

- embed ambition and accelerate the pace of school improvement – inadequate.

External support

The local authority's statement of action was judged to be fit for purpose. An extensive range of support from advisers and consultants has been provided; some over and above what was set out in the plan. However, staff reported that on occasions, conflicting advice has been given and that they would like some breathing space in order to try to implement and embed changes to practice. The need to scale back the amount of support and ensure that it is focused on where it is most

needed has been recognised by the interim headteacher and the local authority. The establishment of the Interim Executive Board was a positive move and securing the services of the interim headteacher has clearly been beneficial to the school. Some two weeks before this inspection, the local authority carried out a review of the school's progress. The findings painted an accurate picture of the current position. However, despite these positive elements, the efforts of the local authority have not resulted in sufficient progress and as such, the impact of the local authority's support is inadequate.

Priorities for further improvement

- Complete the review of the behaviour policy and ensure that the revised policy is agreed by all and implemented consistently and wholeheartedly.
- Ensure that efforts to bring about improvement are clearly focused on the aspects that need it most and enable improvements to be built on systematically.