

Tribal
1-4 Portland Square
BRISTOL
BS2 8RR

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

Direct T 0845 123 6001
Direct F 0117 315 0430
Direct
email: stephen.godden@tribalgroup.com



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Mrs A Foulkes
Charing Church of England Aided Primary School
School Road
Charing
Ashford
Kent
TN27 0JN

Dear Mrs Foulkes

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools: monitoring inspection of Charing Church of England Aided Primary School

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 4 February 2011, for the time you gave to our telephone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during the inspection. Please pass on my thanks to your staff, the vice-chair of governors, pupils and the local authority representative for giving up their time to talk to me.

Since the last inspection, staffing has remained stable although one class is currently taught by a temporary teacher while the permanent teacher is on extended leave. The school has developed a collaborative partnership with three other schools locally, primarily for staff professional development but also to provide a broader range of activities for pupils. The school's accommodation has been reorganised to make better use of the available buildings and improvements have been made to the grounds. A privately run pre-school opened in the school in September 2010.

As a result of the inspection on 10 and 11 November 2009, 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 good progress in making improvements and good progress in demonstrating a better capacity for sustained improvement.

Pupils' attainment has risen steadily over the last three years, gradually closing the gap between school and national averages. Attainment at the end of Year 6 in 2010 was broadly average in English and mathematics, a significant improvement over previous years. As pupils' attainment is strengthened throughout the school, staff are confident to set increasingly challenging targets for pupils' performance and are



proving successful in meeting these. This is largely due to improvements in teaching. All teaching observed during the visit was good, and in line with the school's own monitoring and assessment. Teachers have improved their understanding of National Curriculum levels and use this to set work in lessons which is closely matched to the wide range of pupils' needs and abilities in each class. As a result, lessons are challenging for pupils of all abilities, including the most able. Test results at the higher level are broadly in line with national averages, and were exceeded in mathematics in 2010. Pupils' achievements are tracked regularly and the information used well to plan appropriate intervention when a pupil is not making the expected progress. Teachers have high expectations of pupils, for example of the quantity and quality of the work to be achieved in a given time, developing a sense of urgency in lessons. This was seen in a lesson when pupils developed their reading skills and understanding of text by rewriting complex ideas in their own words and in another where pupils extended their vocabulary by recording their 'magpie' words. A focus on handwriting and presentation is reflected in the pride pupils take in their written work.

Pupils comment positively on the improvements in school life and how the changes to the curriculum are making learning more interesting. They particularly enjoy the many opportunities they have for sports coaching, and some are looking forward to growing vegetables and flowers when the garden area is completed. Pupils benefit from the links across subjects with topics often used as the basis for writing tasks or, as seen during the visit, when pupils used canopic jars as symbols for pictograms linking with their study of Ancient Egypt. They respond well to stimulating classroom display which gives them good guidance on current learning and offers interesting reflection on the topics being studied. Pupils know their targets because they are shared in a way they understand. Teachers frequently refer to them in lessons, often reminding older pupils of what they have to do to reach the next level. Marking is frequent and detailed, and generally highlights how work can be improved further. There is a growing requirement for pupils to respond to teachers' additional questions or advice, but teachers are aware that this is not yet managed consistently by setting time aside for the activity.

The school has responded with energy and imagination to improve the outdoor area for the Early Years Foundation Stage. It now provides a vibrant facility as a full outdoor classroom, including zoned areas under a canopy, a large outdoor stage and a range of climbing equipment to promote children's physical development. During the visit, children were very busy outside using a writing section and investigating water flow through a series of pipes, while others built their confidence using tricycles and scooters. Provision effectively promotes activities across all the required areas of learning; for example, children 'write' orders in the role-play area currently set up as a Chinese takeaway restaurant. Such activities effectively develop children's early literacy skills, an area identified as requiring further development.

The school is well placed to continue its journey of improvement. The headteacher, staff and members of the governing body have shown determination in using the



recommendations made by Ofsted in November 2009 to guide the school's development effectively. Much of the success is due to the skill and vision shown by the headteacher in building strong team work among staff and setting up rigorous systems to review the impact of initiatives. As a consequence, self-evaluation is accurate and there is a strong awareness of the areas still requiring further improvement. As a consequence, the school has improved areas beyond those specifically identified in the last inspection, including attendance and behaviour which support pupils' achievement. The few parents spoken with were positive about the improvements in recent years, commenting on its 'get up and go'. The school has benefited from good quality support from the local authority and has been instrumental in helping staff to moderate their understanding of the quality of pupils' work. Similarly, the partnership with the group of four schools locally makes a good contribution, particularly in providing opportunities for ongoing professional development which this small school would find difficult to provide on its own.

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

Helen Hutchings
Additional Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in November 2009

- Raise attainment and achievement by improving the quality of teaching so that the vast majority is good or better by autumn 2010 by:
 - raising teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve
 - ensuring that assessment information is used consistently to challenge more able pupils to achieve as well as they can
 - setting individual targets for pupils in order to help them to move on more rapidly by understanding their next steps in learning.

- Improve the outdoor learning environment for the Early Years Foundation Stage.