

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:** Fiona.allan1@tribalgroup.com

3 December 2010

Headteacher
Culvers House Primary School
Orchard Avenue
Mitcham
Surrey
CR4 4JH

Dear Mr Eyre-Brook

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Culvers House Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 23 and 24 November 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 second monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in November 2009. 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 – satisfactory.

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – satisfactory.

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 governing body and the Director of Children's Services for Sutton.

Yours sincerely

Carmen Rodney
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Increase the proportion of good teaching and eliminate inadequate teaching by:
 - ensuring activities and the pace of lessons meet the needs of individual pupils
 - providing marking that consistently gives pupils advice on how they can improve their learning
 - providing learning targets that are focused and manageable.
- Ensure the curriculum promotes effective progress in each subject by:
 - providing work that securely builds on pupils' knowledge and understanding
 - developing the teachers' skills to engage pupils more actively in their learning.
- Take more urgent action to raise pupils' achievement by:
 - rigorously evaluating the impact of provision, particularly teaching on pupils' learning
 - using assessment information accurately to track pupils' progress and ensure that learning activities meet their needs.

Special measures: monitoring of Culvers House Primary School

Report from the second monitoring inspection on 23–24 November 2010

Evidence

The inspector observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the senior and middle leaders, the Chair of the Governing Body, a local authority appointed governor and the link adviser. The inspector held a telephone discussion with the School Improvement Partner.

Context

There have been a number of changes in staffing since the previous monitoring visit in May 2010. A permanent deputy headteacher has been appointed and began working at the school on 1 November 2010. Of the two assistant headteachers' posts, one appointment was made with a start date in January 2011. Currently, the local authority is sponsoring a seconded interim assistant headteacher who is supporting school improvement. Altogether, three new teachers were appointed. Additionally, nine pupils left the school at the end of the last academic year.

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

When compared with the 2009 results, the 2010 national tests for Year 6 pupils in mathematics improved significantly in the percentage of pupils achieving the standard expected nationally. These were the best results over the last three years. The results declined in English and were well below average. Although the gap in pupils' performance and the national average narrowed in mathematics, it widened in English. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, White British pupils and those of Caribbean heritage made less progress than other groups. In Year 2, attainment was in line with the national average in mathematics but was slightly lower in English when compared with the previous year's results. Overall, a significant minority of the more able pupils did not reach the higher levels. Assessment data for Early Years Foundation show that the vast majority of children attained well above the level expected for their age, with the majority exceeding their targets. This is a significant improvement since the previous inspection.

The absence of a permanent literacy coordinator partly explains the decline in the English results. This has been addressed since the start of September 2010. Analyses of results and pupils' work indicate that weaknesses in mastering basic literacy skills remain. The gaps in pupils' knowledge had not been dealt with adequately until the last two terms. They are still catching up, notably because teaching has improved and there is focused attention on using intervention strategies to improve pupils' basic literacy skills. The school knows the areas for improvement, and has put into place a good range of support programmes to

accelerate pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics. For example, at the start of the school day, well-organised and focused sessions are used to increase pupils' confidence in talking and listening. There is emphasis on pupils using the sound of letters accurately to improve their reading, spelling and vocabulary. This is increasingly helping pupils to read accurately and communicate their ideas clearly in writing. Although the school has developed policies on improving pupils' presentation skills and handwriting, there is still not enough emphasis on these areas; too often, teachers readily accept and praise work that is poorly presented.

Pupils are beginning to make better progress primarily as the school is embedding much improved assessment systems to accelerate their progress. For example, first, there is rigorous use of tracking data and regular tests to track the progress of individuals and groups of pupils. This is leading to early intervention and better match of work to needs. Second, pupils are enthusiastic about their learning, and in all lessons observed, progress was better in an increasing minority of lessons. Third, there is a sharp focus on developing basic skills across the curriculum. In most lessons seen, pupils with special educational needs managed to keep up with their peers because of the support given by the teaching assistants. The school recognises that although pupils are making better progress, there is still much more work to do to accelerate their progress further.

Progress since the last monitoring inspection on the area for improvement:

- Take more urgent action to raise pupils' achievement – satisfactory.

Other relevant pupil outcomes

Behaviour in lessons and around the school is good. Pupils respond well to the good systems to support those whose circumstances have made them vulnerable, including pupils with specific medical needs. The school is inclusive and relationships are strong. There is a high level of tolerance and pupils get on well with each other. They work well in pairs or teams and playground monitors in Years 5 and 6 provide good support for younger pupils. There is good attention to developing pupils' understanding of other cultures.

During this visit, pupils consistently showed a willingness to learn and applied themselves to their learning. They were keen and responded positively to praise and rewards, as seen in the assembly, which celebrated their achievements. Most attend regularly and overall attendance, although average, has improved significantly over the last three terms when it was low. Close partnership work with external partners, in particular, with the Borough School Attendance Service, has led to a slight improvement in reducing the numbers of pupils who do not attend regularly.

The effectiveness of provision

The quality of teaching and learning is much improved since the previous monitoring inspection. The most effective teaching and learning was seen in Key Stage 2. In

these lessons, there was emphasis on developing basic skills and using direct whole-class teaching to enable pupils to make good progress. This was particularly effective when teachers demonstrated the standard of work required by working jointly with pupils to collate and develop ideas. For example, in a few literacy lessons, teachers used the interactive whiteboards to construct and edit extended writing. The attention given to writing accurately contributed to pupils focusing sharply on using a greater range of vocabulary and punctuation marks accurately as well as varying their sentence construction. Resources were well matched to learning objectives and pupils were increasingly aware of what they had to achieve.

Learning was also good when pupils were given opportunity to reflect on and apply the taught skills. Teachers assessed pupils' grasp of the work regularly by using question to probe their understanding. This enabled the teachers to deal with misconceptions before moving pupils on. The use of short, timed activities encouraged pupils to consolidate quickly because they were suitably challenged to grasp new concepts before the work was developed. All of these factors contributed to pupils developing independent learning skills.

In the satisfactory lessons, which have declined, too often, well planned lessons were not delivered to a high standard. As a result, teaching and learning were not conducted at a brisk pace; the teachers talked at the pupils for too long without using questions well to assess their learning. Additionally, talk was not well planned for; opportunities were missed to extend pupils' speaking and listening skills. Pupils did not produce good quality work because enough time was not spent giving them clear instructions. Across the school, although teachers are sharing clear learning objectives with pupils, the skills pupils are expected to develop lack clarity. Tasks rather than skills to be developed are identified.

In all classes, the management of pupils was good. Teaching assistants were well briefed but although they provided good individual or group support, too often they contributed very little to supporting the teacher during whole-class teaching.

Much has been done to develop the use of assessment data to improve teaching and learning. The whole-school focus on effective target setting to track pupils' progress and meeting their needs has begun to have an impact on lesson planning and teaching. Realistic and challenging targets have been set in literacy and numeracy. Analyses of results are used to identify individual and group underachievement so that targeted and effective action can be taken early. There is a clear approach to ensuring that planning meets the needs of different ability groups. For example, in mathematics, pupils are grouped by ability. Supported by the local authority, the school has put into place good systems to track pupils' progress. This includes regular tests and individual mark sheets for each pupil in their books. Pupils understand what they have achieved and, increasingly, they know the next steps needed. The marking policy has been rigorously reviewed and is used to inform the school about pupils' achievement in lessons and over time.

In most classes, books are marked regularly and there is good attention to giving clear and detailed comments as well as next steps. However, high quality marking is not consistent throughout the school.

The school has made reasonable changes to the curriculum provision to enrich pupils' experiences by introducing French and Spanish as well as art, drama and dance, taught by specialists in designated rooms. Enrichment activities have been used well to provide pupils with opportunities which support and further learning. For example, activities days and residential trips have been provided for older pupils. Plans are in place to audit each subject to ensure that there is appropriate coverage of topics and skills. Steps have been taken to allocate more time to science and to give the science coordinator adequate time to develop the subject. Additional and updated resources have improved the provision in information and communication technology. Although pupils have a richer experience, the school has yet to review the structure of the curriculum.

Progress since the last inspection on the areas for improvement:

- Increase the proportion of good teaching and eliminate inadequate teaching – good.
- Ensure the curriculum promotes effective progress in each subject – satisfactory.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The headteacher has provided much-needed stability and continuity for the staff and pupils. His supportive and calm style of management has served the school community well. He has developed a positive team spirit and, as a result, morale is good. He is well supported by the new deputy headteacher and their different skills are well balanced in the drive for school improvement. With the support of the local authority, there has been a sharp and successful focus on improving the quality of teaching and learning. Very good external support has helped the school to meet its interim milestone on teaching and learning early. The key subject coordinators are better prepared for their roles. However, they have not yet been trained to carry out lesson observations and to take full ownership of monitoring.

Teachers have been given very clear guidelines about expectations in relation to teaching and learning. As a result, they are increasingly aware of the standard of teaching required to improve outcomes. The senior leaders have laid the foundations for effective assessment procedures. Targets are linked to pupils' progress and teachers' performance. Regular progress meetings have increased accountability at all levels within the school through to the governing body and the local authority. Senior leaders' evaluation of teaching and learning is accurate, as is their analysis of the school's needs. The recent senior appointments and developments since September 2010 have improved the school's capacity to develop further.

Nevertheless, at this stage, while the school is driving and embedding new systems, it is still dependent on the local authority's support.

The governing body does not yet have a full complement of governors, but it is increasingly holding the school to account. There is a clear and strategic understanding of establishing and sustaining improvement under high quality leadership and management at all levels within the school. Consequently, appointments have not been rushed.

External support

The local authority has been instrumental in driving improvement and has increased its resources and support for the school. It has also reorganised its approach to giving advice and support. Advisers and consultants have organised and delivered valuable training for the whole school. They have also worked with subject coordinators as they seek to develop their roles within the school. The support has been very good against a backdrop of frequent changes in officers linked to the school and staffing within the school. The local authority's commitment to the school is highly valued by the staff and the governing body. The new link adviser is on a temporary contract to work with the school until the end of August 2011. The local authority recognises the necessity to ensure continuity and minimise the frequent changes but a decision has not yet been made about the post.