

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: rebecca.jackson@tribalgroup.com

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Mrs D Andrew
The Headteacher
Whitmore Primary School
Bridport Place
London
N1 5JN

Dear Mrs Andrew

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools: monitoring inspection of Whitmore Primary School

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 12 January 2011, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during the inspection. Please also extend my thanks to the Chair of the Governing Body, representative from the Learning Trust, executive principal and the pupils to whom I spoke to at lunch time.

The school is currently in a phase of transition. The current interim headteacher took up her post in September 2010. There has been substantial staff turnover including in the senior leadership. A partnership has recently been formed with a successful federation in the borough. The executive principal of this federation has been offering support to the school and is in the process of extending his executive principal role to also cover Whitmore school.

As a result of the inspection on 12 and 13 October 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 inadequate progress in making improvements and satisfactory progress in demonstrating a better capacity for sustained improvement.

Shortly after the previous inspection, the governing body and the Learning Trust became seriously concerned about low standards in the school. As a result, the Learning Trust issued the school with a warning notice to raise standards. Limited progress was made. There was disagreement between the learning Trust and the school's leaders and managers regarding the quality of education provided by the school and during this time, little progress was made in bringing about the



improvements identified in the Ofsted report. Following the departure of the previous headteacher, the Learning Trust appointed an experienced headteacher from their consultancy team as interim headteacher. She quickly identified that the school's assessment data were unreliable.

As the school did not participate in the 2010 national tests, there is no evidence to suggest the school has been successful in raising pupil attainment since the last inspection. Attainment remains very low.

Over the last term, under the direction of the interim headteacher, more rigorous and robust assessment of the quality of teaching has taken place. This indicates the quality of teaching to be generally satisfactory with some that is inadequate. The school has now begun an intensive drive to raise the quality of teaching through coaching, demonstration lessons and team teaching. Support has been received from the Learning Trust and local schools in coaching teachers to improve their practice. For example, a new approach to literacy was introduced by the new executive principal at the beginning of the week of the monitoring visit. The positive impact could clearly be seen in the joint lesson observations undertaken. There is now an intense focus on developing pupils' language skills and extending their vocabulary. However, this development is too recent to see enough impact on pupil achievement.

When given the right opportunity, pupils are excited by learning and are easy to inspire. For example, in a demonstration science lesson given by a visiting teacher, there was an audible sense of amazement from pupils during a very simple demonstration of the concept of volume. This demonstrated the positive impact of the recently-introduced professional development for teachers.

During the monitoring visit, five lesson observations were undertaken jointly with either the interim headteacher or the executive principal. Together, they have an accurate understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of teaching and learning. Common classroom management routines led to good behaviour in lessons, creating a positive atmosphere for learning. Pupils were keen to participate. The teaching seen was at least satisfactory. The most common weakness preventing lessons from being good was that teaching was not sufficiently adapted to challenge the most able and check that the least able could understand what they were supposed to be doing. This was a key area for improvement in the last inspection report and remains so.

Pupils speak positively about the school. Amongst the Year 6 pupils interviewed, art and physical education emerged as favourite subjects suggesting a preference for practical activities. Although the behaviour of pupils in lessons is good, outside of the classroom, for example in corridors, pupils lack self-control.

Since the last inspection, governors have greatly increased the rigour with which they hold the school to account and the chair of governors has proved very active in initiating much of the recent improvement.



There are now clear signs of progress. The clear identification of weaknesses by the interim headteacher, the robust action of the Learning Trust and the additional resources provided through consultants and visiting teachers provide secure evidence of the improvement in the school's capacity to improve further. However it is only in the last term that these have begun to have a positive impact and so the overall progress over the fifteen months since the last inspection is inadequate.

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

Adrian Lyons
Her Majesty's Inspector



Annex

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

- Raise pupils' attainment and accelerate their progress in writing and mathematics in Years 3 to 6, by:
 - intensifying the focus on developing pupils' language skills and extending their vocabulary
 - making sure that the more able pupils are always given suitably challenging work
 - ensuring that the few pupils without individual support who find learning more difficult are given tasks matched to their needs.

- Raise the quality of teaching from satisfactory to good by:
 - making sharper use of day-to-day assessment to plan activities that build effectively on each pupil's previous learning
 - involving pupils more productively in checking their own progress towards their targets and in assessing how well they have done in lessons
 - involve all governors more productively in evaluating the school's performance and challenging it to raise pupils' attainment.