

Tribal Education
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** 0845 123 6002
www.ofsted.gov.uk **email:** sarah.cartlidge@tribalgroup.com

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Mrs L Nichols
The Headteacher
Grovelands Infant School
Terrace Road
Walton on Thames
Surrey
KT12 2EB

Dear Mrs Nichols

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools: monitoring inspection of Grovelands Infant School

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 3 November 2010, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during the inspection. Please pass on my thanks to staff and pupils who gave up some of their time to meet me.

There have been many changes to the school's context since the previous inspection in July 2009. A new deputy headteacher has been appointed who has also taken on responsibility for the Early Years Foundation Stage and assessment. Provision within the Early Years Foundation Stage has expanded and there are now four Reception classes and an extra Nursery session. A number of staff changes have also occurred throughout the school with the appointment of a new business manager, teaching and special needs assistants and, since September 2010, two newly qualified teachers have also joined the school. Changes have also taken place within the governing body with a new chair of governors being appointed.

As a result of the inspection on 1 July 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 **satisfactory** progress in making improvements and **satisfactory** progress in demonstrating a better capacity for sustained improvement.

Pupils enjoy coming to school and feel very safe. They know that they can turn to an adult at any time for support and are very proud of the 'buddy system' that enables them to care for one another.

Since the last inspection children continue to enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills expected for their age and make satisfactory progress. They join Year 1 with the skills and knowledge needed for the next stage of their education. As pupils move through Key Stage 1 they make satisfactory progress, although there are signs of this improving particularly in writing and numeracy. This is a result of additional intervention and targeted support within small groups. However, the general rate of progress remains inconsistent across the school. In the 2010 end-of-Year-2 assessments, despite attainment improving, particularly in writing, it remained broadly average.

The internal data, book scrutiny and lesson observations indicate that some pupils are now making good progress particularly in writing and mathematics. However, this progress is not consistent enough and leaders are still working to ensure that all pupils do equally well. The full impact of improvements since the last inspection is yet to be seen in the quality of teaching and learning and the end of Year 2 assessments. The progress being made by pupils with special educational needs and/or learning difficulties is similar to that of their peers.

The teaching sampled during the inspection from Nursery through to Year 2 demonstrated that it is still satisfactory overall with occasional good pockets. In the strongest lessons, planning is detailed and clearly identifies the needs of all pupils. Resources are used well to stimulate pupils' learning and, as a result, pupils are engaged and eager to learn. In these lessons pupils are clear about the 'learning objectives' which are precise and well discussed. Teacher questioning is used to good effect to assess pupils' learning and rectify any misconceptions. This ensures that in these lessons pupils are challenged to achieve their best. However, this good practice is still too infrequent and not consistently embedded across the school. Work set in some lessons does not meet the needs of individual pupils and as a result some pupils become restless and behaviour is satisfactory. The pace of learning in these lessons is slow and pupils spend too much time listening to the teacher rather than being actively engaged in their learning. Observations in the Early Years Foundation Stage indicate that greater use is made of the improved outside environment, and seamless learning from the indoor to outdoor environment is beginning to be established such that children were observed learning their number bonds whilst playing in the sand pit.

Since the last inspection, the school has worked effectively with parents and carers, the education welfare officer and the home-school link worker to improve attendance. Changes have been made to the attendance policy such that parents and carers now have to apply for a leave of absence and this is only granted in exceptional circumstances. Families with persistent absenteeism are now issued with a penalty notice and first day calling has become a normal part of daily procedures to encourage full attendance. Changes to the time of morning entry into the school have been made to ensure a timely start to lessons. The introduction of class certificates and the 'attendance Ted', along with individual half-termly certificates for 100% attendance, has provided pupils with a greater motivation to attend more

regularly. As a result of these changes attendance is beginning to improve despite still remaining low.

The school's process and systems for tracking pupil progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage have been strengthened since the last inspection. The school has introduced 'learning journals' in Nursery and 'I-profiles' in Reception. Staff have been on a number of courses supporting them in developing their understanding of the Early Learning Goals and how best to observe learning to inform baseline assessment. As a result of this there is now a consistent tracking system in the Early Years Foundation stage that is beginning to provide an accurate picture on children's skills and progress. As this is still at an early stage of development observations made by adults are not always used to support children's next steps to learning or to inform planning. The school is also considering how best to develop the role of the key worker and to introduce the concept of a 'focused child' so that teachers, parents and carers and children can work closer together to improve the learning opportunities for children within this provision.

The headteacher and the deputy headteacher are very clear about the areas for improvement. The school development plan accurately identifies the areas of development and has underpinned the progress made since the last inspection with the satisfactory support of the local authority. This support has helped to develop consistent monitoring practices, staff knowledge in mathematics and improve the Early Years Foundation Stage. Teachers have also visited other schools to further develop their own practices within mathematics and Reception. Many initiatives have been introduced since the last inspection, some of which have had clear measurable impact on pupil outcomes such as the introduction of booster groups and targeted teaching in writing. However, the school development plan does not always have clear measurable success criteria attached to each initiative and consequently outcomes are not always analysed to full effect. A clear pattern on monitoring and staff development has helped bring about the changes since the last inspection.

The challenge for the school is to now ensure that the rate of progress is accelerated by improving the consistency in the quality of teaching and further improving the levels of attendance. The school's sound capacity for improvement is underpinned by a shared culture within the senior leadership team of driving forward improvements which have to date delivered satisfactory progress in areas identified for improvement at the last inspection.

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

Susan Gadd
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Improve the attendance by strengthening the school's systems for promoting good attendance.
- Improve teaching and learning so that it is at least good and helps children to make good progress.
- Improve assessment and tracking systems in the Early Years Foundation Stage, so that teachers have a secure understanding of children's skills when they join the school and the subsequent progress they make.