

Tribal  
1-4 Portland Square  
BRISTOL  
BS2 8RR

T 0300 123 1231  
Text Phone: 0161 6188524  
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk  
[www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

Direct T 0845 123 6001  
Direct F 0117 3150 430  
Direct email: sarah.cartlidge@tribalgroup.com

7 March 2011

Mrs Victoria Russell  
Delves Junior School  
Bell Lane  
Walsall  
West Midlands  
WS5 4PU

Dear Mrs Russell

### **Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools: monitoring inspection of Delves Junior School**

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 4 March 2011, 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 the staff, governors and pupils who met with me during my visit.

Since the previous inspection, there have been several lengthy absences by teachers because of maternity leave and illness, although the staffing situation is now much more stable. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities has risen, and there have been steady increases in the numbers of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and of pupils from minority ethnic heritages.

As a result of the inspection on 6 and 7 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*

good progress in demonstrating a better capacity for sustained improvement.

Pupils' attainment and progress by the end of Key Stage 2 have shown steady improvement, especially in the last six months. In English, including writing, the results in 2010 were the best for several years and pupils attained slightly higher than the national average. In mathematics, an identified area for improvement,

January 2011



there was some improvement and pupils attained very close to the national average. Progress over time in mathematics was satisfactory and not quite so marked as in English, as the overall attainment of these pupils was at least average when they entered the school in Year 3. There is strong evidence that, after a slow start following the last inspection, progress is now accelerating in mathematics throughout the school so that it begins to mirror the better progress in writing. This is because school leaders have established a much clearer picture of the reasons for underachievement in mathematics, and have introduced a number of new and often exciting initiatives to promote learning. There is a much greater emphasis on learning through investigation and relating mathematics to everyday activities. Pupils are very enthusiastic about this fresh approach, saying that they find mathematics fun now, but always challenging, and that teachers help them feel more confident in their learning. They particularly like assessing their own work and most have good knowledge of both their 'major' and their 'mini' targets for learning, which are carefully matched to individual needs.

The school has developed its own assessment strategies and this is helping to identify pupils needing extra help because they may be falling behind. This has been helpful especially in improving the learning of some pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. The school has also been able to analyse accurately the reasons for so few girls reaching above average attainment in mathematics and to take action to remedy this. However, the school recognises that formal testing once a term may not give information quickly enough in order to take action if pupils do fall behind. Better use of assessment data is helping to improve teachers' planning for individual needs. Pupils and teachers work well together and have good relationships, which results in very good behaviour throughout the school. Teachers make significant efforts to provide stimulating and lively learning opportunities for all pupils. This was very evident during this visit when so many staff and pupils were dressed imaginatively and colourfully as book characters for a celebration of 'World Book Day'. Pupils are encouraged to work often in pairs, and also independently. There is, though, a tendency sometimes for teachers to leave some pupils too long without monitoring their learning.

The school has introduced a new handwriting and presentation policy throughout the school. This is helping pupils to improve steadily as they develop their skills and learn to take care to ensure that their writing is well presented and accurate. At present this is more successful in formal writing in English lessons. Some presentation remains careless in other subjects across the curriculum, for example mathematics, where pupils do not always pay sufficient attention to accurate writing and spelling of mathematical language. However, teachers' marking has improved significantly and is having a positive effect in guiding improvement.

The school has been consistently proactive in seeking the support and guidance of Walsall's Education Provider. This has had a positive effect, especially on the efforts

to raise attainment in mathematics and English, and has led to the adoption of proven initiatives to make learning more interesting and exciting for pupils. The school leadership has been strengthened by the greater involvement of subject leaders in managing their subjects, and more stability in the management of mathematics after several years of repeated changes of coordinator. In spite of staffing difficulties, the headteacher and senior management team have kept the school well focused on the key priorities of improving teaching and learning, and raising attainment in English and mathematics. Challenges remain in ensuring that recent improvement in attainment is maintained. The school has nevertheless established a good track record through raising attainment in English, improving the assessment and tracking of pupils' progress, and robust monitoring, helping teaching to become consistently good. These developments reflect strongly on the school's ability to continue to improve further.

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

Rodney Braithwaite  
Additional inspector

## **Annex**

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

- Raise achievement and standards in mathematics by providing more investigative work and sharpening pupils' individual learning targets.
- Improve the consistency of teaching by ensuring that tasks are always well matched to pupils' abilities and provide opportunities for pupils to work independently.
- In the drive to improve writing, implement a consistent approach to handwriting and presentation.