

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
Email: rebecca.jackson@tribalgroup.com



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Mrs Hughes
Headteacher
Roman Way Primary School
Roman Way
Andover
Hampshire
SP10 5JY

Dear Mrs Hughes

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools: monitoring inspection of Roman Way Primary School

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 9 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 governors, the head of school and teachers who spent time talking to me. In particular, please let the head boy and girl know how informative I found their tour of the school.

Since the time of the last inspection, the school has formed a hard federation with another local primary school and a junior school. The headteacher left the school, and after two temporary replacements, the deputy headteacher was appointed to head of school to manage day-to-day operations. The previous headteacher of one of the other federation schools has been in post as executive headteacher since September 2010 and is responsible for strategic leadership. A Key Stage 2 leader has been appointed from within the existing staff, and the deputy headteacher has not been replaced. One teacher has left the school and been replaced and another has increased her hours from part-time to full-time. A number of appointments have been made to the federation which contribute to provision at Roman Way: an inclusion manger, a librarian and a bursar.

One new governor and three of the original governors now sit on the new governing body of the federation. The chair of the new governing body is from one of the other federation schools.

The school building has been extensively refurbished, including new accommodation to provide more office space, a community room and a music and drama room.



The school was removed from the Improving Schools Programme in July 2010 in response to the improved outcomes for pupils.

As a result of the inspection on 6 and 7 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 satisfactory progress in making improvements and satisfactory progress in demonstrating a better capacity for sustained improvement.

The recent formation of a federation with other local primaries and the consequent changes in organisation and leadership have meant that the pace of improvement since the last inspection has not been consistent. A strong initial focus on raising achievement led to a sharp rise in attainment in national tests at the end of Year 6 in 2010, and pupils achieved results close to the national average. The rate of progress for these pupils from their very low starting points at the end of Year 2 was significantly above that found nationally. More pupils achieved the higher levels of attainment in both English and mathematics than in 2009. This accelerated progress was not evident for all pupils across the school, however, and attainment at the end of Year 2 fell in 2010, and was significantly below the national average in reading, writing and numeracy, with no pupils achieving the higher levels. Across the school, girls outperformed boys, but pupils known to be eligible for free school meals did as well as, and in some cases better than, their peers.

The rate of progress in other year groups has begun to accelerate since the beginning of this academic year, particularly in Key Stage 1 and the Early Years Foundation Stage. In the Early Years Foundation Stage this is the result of an increased focus on communication and language skills and more accurate assessment systems. In other year groups, there is now a very robust system of assessment and review to identify pupils who are underachieving. This triggers short-term, tightly focused plans for individual pupils, led by teachers and teaching assistants who take responsibility for short-term intervention. There is then regular evaluation of how well this is working for each pupil. This process and targeted one-to-one tuition for some pupils in numeracy, writing and communication skills have all led to an increase in the rate at which pupils make progress. More comprehensive systems for identifying and monitoring those pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are now in place. In the past, low attendance has had a negative impact on pupils' achievement, but absence is now falling as result of more robust monitoring systems, and pupils are beginning to be aware of how important it is to attend school regularly.

The quality of teaching has improved as result of a thorough system of monitoring and comprehensive feedback. Teachers describe this process as very helpful in improving their practice. Each time a lesson observation is carried out, the development points identified from last time are followed through. In all the lessons



seen during this visit, there was a very positive working atmosphere, with pupils clearly enjoying their work. Pupils are highly motivated, behave well and are ambitious to succeed. In the best lessons seen, teachers had high expectations of all pupils, whatever their ability, and pupils had developed the skills and a vocabulary to allow them to discuss their learning, both with one another and with the teacher, which helped them make good progress. In the weaker lessons, planning focused more on what the teacher was doing rather than on the quality of pupils' learning. The activities provided did not always match the objective of the lesson so that learning could proceed in small sequential steps. In addition, pupils did not have clear success criteria for the lesson to show them exactly what they needed to do to make good progress.

Although regular assessment is used very well to identify pupils who are underachieving, teachers do not consistently use the knowledge they gain through marking, or their observations of pupils in lessons, to plan work that is precisely matched to pupils' individual needs. Generally marking is carried out regularly and identifies both strengths and areas for improvement, but no time is allocated in lessons for pupils to act on teachers' suggestions.

The new governing body has inevitably been very focused on ensuring rigorous procedures are in place for meeting its statutory responsibilities. The new chair is very experienced, and the governing body benefits from a wide range of expertise from across the three schools in the federation. Stronger links with parents now are well established through a regular governors' newsletter, attendance at parents' evenings and assemblies where parents are invited, but a survey of parents' views has not been carried out for some time. The governing body is aware of the strengths and weaknesses of the school, asking challenging questions and visiting the school regularly. However, neither detailed information collected from school visits, nor the level of challenge provided by governors to hold the school's leaders to account, is systematically recorded in the minutes.

The school's leaders have focused very effectively on raising achievement and starting to ensure long-term sustainable change by improving the quality of teaching and learning. However, action planning, monitoring and evaluation in other areas are less precise, and the role and accountability of middle leaders are currently under-developed. Developing the curriculum for more able pupils has been a slower area of change, although these pupils are now making more progress in both mathematics and science.

The school has made good use of support from the local authority advisors for literacy and numeracy to improve provision, particularly at Key Stage 1. An advanced skills teacher has worked with the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 in developing and assessing writing skills. Leaders have also worked successfully with the school improvement partner and a primary inspector to develop their understanding and use of assessment data and the quality of teaching and learning.



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

Mary Massey

Her Majesty's Inspector



Annex

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

- Improve learning where elements of teaching are weaker than in the best lessons by:
 - giving pupils the right lesson objectives for their stage of learning, so they can feed back their level of understanding to the teacher
 - making sure marking in all subjects and year groups gives clear advice on how to improve
 - making sure the separate work given to the most able pupils in lessons takes them further in their understanding of the subject
 - closely linking individual improvements to teaching by tracking whether previous development points have been acted upon in future lesson observations.
- Improve the curriculum for the most able pupils by:
 - providing guidance to teachers about the work the most able mathematicians should follow as they move through the school
 - ensuring that guidance for teachers about how key science concepts are to be developed from year group to year group includes a final stage of understanding that would be required of the most able in Year 6.
- Improve governance by:
 - ensuring all governors have a depth of understanding of the school so that strategy is set and challenge given by the whole governing body
 - involving governors in working with the school to enhance engagement with parents.