

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 **email:** sarah.cartlidge@tribalgroup.com

30 March 2011

Mrs Rachel Howchin
Headteacher
West Coker C of E VC Primary School
High Street
West Coker
Yeovil
Somerset
BA22 9AS

Dear Mrs Howchin

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools: monitoring inspection of West Coker C of E VC Primary School

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 29 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 chair of governors and the pupils who were so keen to tell me about their work.

Since the last inspection a declining number on roll has led to a reduction from three and a half classes (with four main teaching groups in morning sessions) to three. Consequently, one teacher's temporary contract was not renewed. Two part-time members of staff now have senior teacher status and deputise for the headteacher in her absence, as well as supporting her in management roles. Physical changes have resulted in new sinks and running water fitted to each classroom, internet accessibility in all rooms and new resources for information and communication technology (ICT), with enough laptops for one per pupil in ICT lessons. The school has recently achieved the Financial Management Standard in Schools (FMSIS) status recognising strengths in the way the budget is managed.

As a result of the inspection on 17 March 2010, 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 good progress in making improvements, and good progress in demonstrating a better capacity for sustained improvement.

Although not the main foci of this visit, it is clear that strengths identified in the last inspection report in care, guidance and support, the Early Years Foundation Stage,

behaviour and pupils' personal development have been maintained. First-hand observation, discussion with staff and pupils and monitoring reports from the school's improvement partner are testaments to this and the positive contribution such successes bring to the school's ethos.

Much-improved assessment, comprehensive record keeping and use of data have resulted in higher expectations of what all pupils are capable of. This is having a positive impact on achievement generally, but most obviously on potentially higher-attaining pupils in mathematics. Throughout the school there are greater proportions of pupils working at above-average levels than at the time of the last inspection, and attainment is rising. More opportunities for investigative work are paying dividends in developing pupils' problem-solving skills. For example, in a good Years 4, 5 and 6 lesson, more-able pupils were totally engrossed in code breaking to solve a 'murder' puzzle. Their understanding of angles and how to measure them was considerably enhanced, as well as their ability to make deductions based on evidence. Pupils of all abilities were well challenged and supported and made good progress. Similarly, in a good literacy session for Years 2 and 3, the teacher skilfully presented work on traditional stories that could be interpreted at different levels. More-able pupils made good progress in varying sequences, using connectives and developing characterisation, while the least able improved sentence construction and use of vocabulary. It was clear that the teacher knows pupils well and uses assessment information effectively to make learning relevant.

Observations made during this inspection and school and local authority records show that the quality of teaching is usually good and sometimes better in all three classes. Targets are set for groups of pupils and the school overall, and used to gauge progress. This gives good support to the teaching of mixed-age and -ability classes, with work routinely set to meet the varying needs of pupils. This process is extended in the youngest class to specific individual targets children know well. The success of this in driving up attainment is a good model for further development throughout the school. The introduction of 'assessment for learning', where pupils evaluate their own and others' work, has heightened awareness of what pupils can do to make improvements. Pupils work well in groups and are being successfully encouraged to show independence and make choices to develop their own lines of enquiry. Good use is being made of new ICT resources for research.

Strengths in teaching include good use of teaching assistants, very good questioning that prompts pupils to think before answering, clear objectives well communicated to pupils, and good pace. Joint planning, designed to interest pupils and make learning enjoyable, also ensures that basic skills and knowledge are covered in a systematic way. This has been achieved through developments in leadership and management, leading to more incisive monitoring of areas for development. Improvements are targeted and effectively evaluated. The drive and ambition of the headteacher are now reinforced by the two senior teachers and the well-informed governing body. Much-improved delegation of management responsibilities, strong teamwork and a commitment to mutual support result in shared expertise and accurate joint

moderation of pupils' performance. Pupils' books and school records indicate that this is having a marked impact on the quality of learning and on pupils' achievement. Positives in the success of initiatives are witness to the school's growing track record and are clear indicators of the school's good progress in establishing a greater capacity to sustain further improvement.

Some aspects designed to improve pupils' awareness of diversity in lifestyles, faiths and customs in United Kingdom society represent good progress. There is now a detailed action plan which allocates responsibility, identifies time scales and costing implications, and highlights success criteria. Planning to make much more obvious cross-curricular studies of different countries and the richness of cultures is working well, with Africa having a high profile as a theme for all pupils. The quality of work in art and dance is good and supports pupils' creative development well. Links with a school in Swindon are giving pupils the opportunity to find out about different ethnic cultures and make comparisons. There is still more to do to widen such opportunities to bring the school's contribution to community cohesion to the 'good' level. However, the school has made a good start. A central feature is that governors and staff are now monitoring the quality and impact of policy and practice against pupils' understanding.

The school is effectively supported by the local authority. Advice and guidance make a positive contribution to school development planning and have successfully encouraged schools in the area to share expertise and undertake joint training. Suggestions made as part of monitoring visits have prompted improvements and confirmation of the school's good progress has underpinned staff morale.

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

Mike Burghart

Additional inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in March 2010

- Improve teaching quality to make it consistently good, particularly in mathematics, by ensuring that the more able pupils are sufficiently challenged.
- Extend the rigour with which assessment is used to raise standards by:
 - embedding new practices for assessing pupils' work and making pupils aware of the next steps in their learning across all subjects
 - encouraging greater pupil independence in using their targets to review and improve their work.
- Implement plans to distribute leadership roles more fully to accelerate the pace of improvement.
- Extend pupils' understanding and appreciation of cultural diversity in modern Britain and the world-wide community.