

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



6 October 2011

Mrs F Hazeel
The Headteacher
Plaistow Hill Infant and Nursery School
Roman Way
Higher St Budeaux
Plymouth
Devon
PL5 2DT

Dear Mrs Hazeel

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools: monitoring inspection of Plaistow Hill Infant and Nursery School

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 5 October 2011, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during the inspection. I would be grateful if you would thank the group of pupils, the members of staff and the representatives of the governing body who met with me. I also appreciated the opportunity to speak with the Primary Leadership Adviser from the local authority.

There have been several changes since the previous inspection. In April 2011, a new Early Years Foundation Stage leader was appointed internally. This appointment replaced an interim arrangement in which the responsibilities had been covered by the headteacher. Two new members joined the governing body in July 2011 and a third new governor is in the process of being appointed. These positions fill longstanding vacancies that were present at the time of the previous inspection. A new chair of governors was elected in September 2011.

As a result of the inspection on 23 and 24 June 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 satisfactory progress in demonstrating a better capacity for sustained improvement.

School leaders have worked vigorously to improve the quality of teaching and learning. Regular training and moderation exercises supported by local authority consultants have ensured that teachers have a clearer understanding of what is



expected of pupils in English and mathematics. Their assessments of what pupils can do are more accurate and the information is used increasingly well to plan lessons that meet the needs of all pupils. Observation of a sample of lessons and work in books confirm that pupils are making greater progress and their attainment is rising.

In 2011, unvalidated national assessments for the end of Key Stage 1 show that pupils' attainment has risen in reading, writing and mathematics. These improvements reversed the falling trends in attainment in writing and mathematics. Overall attainment was broadly average and there was a marked increase in the proportions of pupils who reached the expected age-related levels. Girls' attainment improved noticeably, reflecting the effectiveness of the actions taken in response to the previous year's results. The school has rightly identified the need to focus on developing the literacy skills of boys and pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. The school's most recent assessment information shows that pupils in the current Year 2 are on track to maintain these improvements.

Pupils achieve more in lessons because the quality of teaching has improved. Most pupils made good progress in the sample of lessons seen during the monitoring inspection. This is because teachers used their confident knowledge of subjects to provide clear explanations and probing questions. A noticeable example was observed in a Year 1 lesson on retelling a familiar traditional tale. In this lesson, the class teacher effectively dramatised the story of Cinderella while skilfully questioning pupils about how they had felt when they had received an invitation to an event. Consequently, pupils empathised with the characters and drew on their own experience when writing invitations. Pupils' good behaviour, their enthusiastic discussions and cooperative working with others were common features of the lessons seen. Teaching assistants provided capable support for those pupils with additional needs. At times, several pupils became restless and their progress slowed. This was because the teachers talked for too long and pupils had insufficient time to be active. On occasions, the tasks failed to challenge the more-able pupils or provide them with enough opportunities for investigation and discovery.

There is a comprehensive system for monitoring the school's work that offers many opportunities for school leaders to evaluate the difference that actions are making. Senior and middle leaders provide incisive summaries of pupils' attainment and progress. Middle leaders report that they have a greater involvement in observing lessons and sampling pupils' work. While the feedback provided to teachers is informative, it is not sufficiently focused on the progress made by different groups of pupils in lessons. Teachers know they are accountable and are increasingly confident in analysing their pupil performance data. Consequently, assessment information is utilised increasingly well to plan future learning activities. For example, the Nursery class has recently introduced a programme of music and dance activities in response to lower levels of creative development amongst boys.

Despite longstanding vacancies, the work of the governing body is gaining a higher profile. There is a named link governor allocated to each class and some individuals



visit the school frequently to hear pupils read. Members of the governing body have a growing understanding of the work of the school. This has come largely through the detailed reports they receive, discussions with subject leaders and membership of one of the curriculum teams that check and process the school development plan. Minutes of meetings show that members of the governing body ask more questions. Nevertheless, formal monitoring visits are not sufficiently focused on pupils' learning in lessons and more should be done to ensure that governors provide challenge and support in equal measure. At the time of this monitoring inspection, the school's arrangements for checking the suitability of staff to work with children met government requirements.

Actions taken to broaden pupils' knowledge and understanding of different cultures have been overseen by a working party led by a middle leader. Curriculum plans have been strengthened and greater use is made of the enrichment experiences gained through visitors and themed events. In recent times, pupils have studied Caribbean art, learnt about Bollywood dancing and celebrated Chinese New Year. A sponsorship arrangement through a national charity has enabled pupils in Year 2 to correspond with a child in China. The challenge now is to evaluate the difference these learning experiences have made to pupils' appreciation of modern multicultural Britain. Plans to establish a link with a school in a contrasting environment have not come about.

Members of staff spoken to during the monitoring inspection, were unanimous in their praise for the support they had received from external partners. For example, the support provided by the School Improvement Partner has maintained the attention of leaders and managers on addressing the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection. Similarly, the support provided by the local authority has been instrumental in improving the learning environment for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

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

Ian Hancock
Her Majesty's Inspector



Annex

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

- By summer 2011, raise attainment and progress by:
 - using monitoring rigorously to develop consistently effective teaching that challenges all pupils
 - using assessment to track pupils' progress in greater detail, identify weaknesses and remedy them.
- By January 2011, ensure governors check up on the school systematically and use this information to provide an effective challenge to school leaders.
- By January 2011, develop links with schools and groups in contrasting environments and promote a better understanding of life in a multicultural country and world.