

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



3 November 2011

Mrs G Burgess
Headteacher
Reculver Church of England Primary School
Hillborough
Herne Bay
Kent
CT6 6TA

Dear Mrs Burgess

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools: monitoring inspection of Reculver Church of England Primary School

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 2 November 2011, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during the inspection. Please thank your Chair of Governors for making time to meet me, and tell your very engaging pupils how much I appreciated their cheerful readiness to show me their work and answer my questions.

Since your school's last inspection, you have returned from a two-year secondment and a new senior leadership team has been established.

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

Your school's provisional results in the 2011 national tests show an upward swing, bringing attainment broadly in line with national averages. A year ago, your detailed and systematic analysis of pupils' current skills and knowledge identified significant gaps and areas of weakness – particularly in mathematics and writing – which you recognised needed to be dealt with before pupils could progress securely. While pupils' rate of progress has been steady rather than rapid, the focus on consolidation as a step towards sustainable improvement has had a positive impact on their learning. Pupils show a confident enjoyment of subjects which they had previously found difficult to engage with, particularly mathematics



and science. Most are now making at least satisfactory progress, both in lessons and in their written work. Opportunities for extended writing have increased and it is clear that, for more formally assessed pieces, pupils have reviewed and redrafted their work. The gap in attainment between girls and boys is closing as boys are now progressing more strongly.

Strategies to support particular groups and individual pupils are continually reviewed and revised in the light of closely monitored and regular assessment of pupils' progress and attitudes to learning. The positive impact of this approach can be seen, for example, in the better-than-average progress made by vulnerable pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. A combination of one-to-one tuition, small-group teaching and in-class support is enabling these pupils, including those with multiple or severe disabilities, to do well.

With constructive support from the local authority and external consultants, members of the senior leadership team are fostering a more confident and lively approach amongst the staff as a whole. The proportion of good teaching is increasing. Pupils have noticed the difference, as a group of Year 5 and Year 6 pupils made clear: 'The school is 100% better... You learn something and it's fun.' Teachers and teaching assistants work well in small teams, planning collaboratively and sharing approaches that have worked well. They communicate enthusiastic subject knowledge, have generally good questioning skills, use a range of resources effectively and respond thoughtfully to pupils' diverse needs and interests.

In lessons, opportunities to prompt the more able to develop their initial responses in a more analytical or imaginative way are not consistently exploited through sufficiently challenging questioning. This is also apparent, on occasion, in the marking of written work. There is, on the other hand, a body of good practice. In a mathematics lesson, for example, pupils in ability-based groups were presented with a problem of appropriate difficulty which they could solve only by working out a coherent method and applying it systematically. They were happy to work towards a solution through trial and error; self-assessment was an integral part of the learning. When some able pupils successfully completed their initial task, they were given a problem that built on the first but required significantly more sophisticated thinking. They rose to the challenge.

The curriculum is undergoing radical review, described by the headteacher as 'work in progress'. There is a move towards a more cross-curricular, thematic approach, so that, for example, science and mathematics are woven into topics such as exploration in the sixteenth century, which pupils respond to positively. Amongst the school's most effective innovations has been the ten minutes of games-based mathematics at the start of each day for each class. Pupils clearly relish the challenge, the competitive element and the choice of activity offered. The positive impact on their confidence and their mathematical skills is evident.



Changes to the school's leadership over the past year are driving improvement, with more widely distributed responsibility for subjects and year groups. While you and your deputy have carried the major responsibility for monitoring teaching, this is now being shared with others in the leadership team. Teachers are keen to extend and reinforce their skills and respond positively to guidance. As subject and phase leaders take on greater responsibility for the quality of teaching and learning in their areas, there will be more opportunities to follow up action points identified during lesson observations. The school improvement plan is clear and practical, with priorities identified through the stringent review and evaluation of strengths and areas for development. Governors are well informed and are actively monitoring the school's progress. Staff morale is now buoyant. Good progress has been made in demonstrating the school's capacity for further improvement.

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

Patricia Metham
Her Majesty's Inspector



Annex

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

- Strengthen the leadership in the school in the drive to improve attainment and achievement for pupils by:
 - ensuring that leaders at all levels analyse data about pupils' attainment and progress rigorously
 - making sure that the improvement plan is as useful as possible in setting out each small step for development, so that leaders can easily, and accurately, check how quickly the school is improving
 - building on the way that senior leaders monitor lessons by going back to lessons more frequently to see how well teachers are acting on development areas
 - developing the roles of all middle managers in monitoring and evaluating the provision and outcomes in the subjects that they are responsible for, especially in science and mathematics.

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning to improve pupils' overall achievement so that, by July 2011, attainment is at least average by:
 - ensuring that the most able pupils are consistently well challenged
 - widening opportunities in mathematics for real-life problem solving and by making links with other subjects
 - providing more time for the teaching of science so that pupils build up a deeper knowledge of the subject
 - making learning more fun and exciting
 - providing more time for pupils to work independently
 - increasing opportunities for pupils to do extended pieces of writing, which they edit and improve, so as to reach higher levels more quickly
 - improving the consistency in the way that teachers mark pupils' work
 - sharing good and outstanding practice more widely among the staff.

