

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 **Direct email:** rebecca.jackson@tribalgroup.com

25 November 2011

Ms Emma Payne
The Headteacher
St Mary Redcliffe Church of England Primary School
Windmill Close
Windmill Hill
Bristol
BS3 4DP

Dear Ms Payne

Special measures: monitoring inspection of St Mary Redcliffe Church of England Primary School

Following my visit with Fran Ashworth, Additional Inspector, to your school on 23 and 24 November 2011, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings.

The inspection was the fourth monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in May 2010. The full list of the areas for improvement which were identified during that inspection is set out in the annex to this letter. The monitoring inspection report is attached and the main judgements are set out below.

Progress since being subject to special measures – satisfactory.

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – good.

This letter and monitoring inspection report will be posted on the Ofsted website. I am copying this letter and the monitoring inspection report to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Interim Executive Board, the Diocese of Bristol and the Strategic Director, Children, Young People and Skills for Bristol.

Yours sincerely

Linda McGill
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Improve teaching and learning and the curriculum in order to accelerate pupils' progress and raise their achievement by:
 - ensuring teachers have high expectations and challenge all pupils
 - improving the balance of lessons so there is less teacher talk and more pupil involvement in practical activities
 - providing activities that engage and motivate pupils.
- Improve the use of assessment information so that teachers can take responsibility for the progress of pupils in their care by:
 - assessing pupils' attainment levels accurately
 - making sure staff use assessment information to tailor activities to meet the full range of pupils' needs.
- Embed ambition and accelerate the pace of school improvement by ensuring that leaders and managers at all levels, together with the governing body, play a full part in:
 - monitoring the school's work, especially teaching and learning
 - identifying improvement priorities
 - evaluating the impact of their actions to raise attainment and achievement.
- Raise attendance.

Special measures: monitoring of St Mary Redcliffe Church of England Primary School

Report from the fourth monitoring inspection on 23 and 24 November 2011

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher and other senior and middle leaders, the vice-chair and another member of the interim executive board and a representative of the local authority.

Context

There has been a substantial change in the staff group since the last monitoring inspection. The substantive headteacher has returned to the school. Six teachers, including a deputy headteacher, joined the school in September, along with three learning support assistants. The restructured leadership teams are fully in place and all teachers are employed on permanent contracts.

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning

Observations in lessons and scrutiny of the school's assessment information confirm that pupils' progress is speeding up and pupils are beginning to make up lost ground. In all year groups from Year 1 onwards, many pupils have made good or better progress in reading, writing and mathematics since the start of this academic year. Progress is still uneven across the school and is better in some year groups than others. The school's assessment information also shows the percentages of pupils who are working at, or above, the expectations for their age. As with progress, there are variations from year group to year group and between classes in the same year group. Attainment in writing is generally low, but attainment in reading and mathematics is closer to what is expected, particularly for older pupils. Senior leaders now have a clear and accurate picture of pupils' performance across the school, and are using this to make sure that interventions are carefully targeted at those pupils who need it most. For example, a group of Somali boys has been identified as underachieving in writing and is receiving particular support.

Expectations have been raised. Teachers know that they must ensure that their pupils make at least good progress, in order to erase previous underachievement. Steps are also being taken to improve outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage, so that last year's exceptionally low performance is not repeated.

Other relevant pupil outcomes

Pupils behaved well in lessons and around the school during this monitoring inspection, as they have during previous visits. However, a difference in pupils' behaviour in lessons was clear. In the past, many pupils have been compliant and

passive, willing to get on with their work, but showing limited enthusiasm or enjoyment. Now, pupils are more actively engaged in lessons because they have many opportunities to discuss their thinking with partners and to work in groups, and because more is being expected of them. They also have a much clearer understanding of what they are learning, as well as what they are doing. The new curriculum has also served to re-energise the pupils. They spoke knowledgeably and with enthusiasm about their current topics.

Attendance has continued to rise, and is currently above average.

Progress since the last monitoring inspection on the area for improvement:

- improve attendance – good.

The effectiveness of provision

One of the key reasons for the improvement in pupils' progress is better teaching. The new teachers have made a good start to the year, and teachers who are of longer standing have continued to work on improving their practice, to good effect. It is clear that whole-school policies, such as for planning and marking, are being consistently implemented in class. Because assessments are regularly completed and are accurate, teachers' ability to match work to pupils' needs has been greatly strengthened. Teachers are becoming increasingly vigilant in lessons, quickly spotting where pupils have grasped an idea and are ready to move on. In a mathematics lesson in Year 2, for example, pupils who showed that they could find halves and quarters of numbers were asked to think about how they might find three quarters. They thought deeply about this and after a while worked out what to do. 'Phew, my brain hurts!' said one of them. Teachers' questioning skills have also improved. Many teachers target questions at individual pupils, expect pupils to respond at length and to give explanations and reasons.

The teaching is not consistently brisk and challenging, and the pace slows occasionally. In some of the sessions where pupils learned letters and sounds (phonics), teaching assistants and teachers did not always pronounce the letter sounds accurately, and pupils were not consistently engaged throughout these sessions.

Pupils' progress is regularly reviewed and discussed by senior and phase leaders and individual teachers. These meetings serve both to hold teachers to account for pupils' learning and progress, but also to highlight where action needs to be taken to boost individual pupils' performance. A wide range of interventions is in place to support those pupils who have not done as well as they should in Key Stage 1 in recent years. Assessment information is increasingly being used strategically by senior leaders. The performance of different groups of pupils is analysed and steps taken to close gaps.

The introduction of the new curriculum has been met with enthusiasm by pupils, staff and parents. Pupils particularly enjoyed the visits that they have made as part

of the topics and which put the learning into context. The topics, such as Vikings, Ancient Egyptians and castles, have also served to increase boys' enthusiasm for writing.

Progress since the last monitoring inspection on the areas for improvement:

- improve teaching, learning and the curriculum – good
- improve the use of assessment – good.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The recent changes at senior level have not slowed the pace of change. Systems that were introduced by the advisory headteacher have been maintained and effectively built upon. The new leadership teams have quickly established themselves and there is a strong sense of purpose and teamwork. Senior and phase leaders are working well together to continue to drive the school forward and there is a clear sense that everyone is pulling in the same direction. Class teachers welcome the support and guidance of phase leaders.

The senior leaders have also quickly got to grips with what is working well in the school and what requires further improvement. The revised plan for raising attainment makes clear what is to be done next, and progress is carefully tracked and impact evaluated. The impact of senior and other leaders' work is showing in the improvements that have continued to be made, and in the positive and supportive ethos that pervades the school.

Relationships with parents and carers have remained positive and strong over the past year. The excellent turn out to curriculum events indicates the school's commitment to involving parents and carers in their children's learning, and the interest that parents and carers have in supporting their children's education.

The interim executive board has had a substantial impact on maintaining stability and continuity during the many changes of the past year. Its members are supportive and closely involved in shaping the school's direction; for example during a recent 'away day' at which the plan for raising attainment was discussed and refined. The recruitment of members of a shadow governing body is about to begin.

Progress since the last monitoring inspection on the areas for improvement:

- embed ambition and accelerate the pace of school improvement – good.

External support

The local authority has continued to provide the school with effective support that has contributed well to the improvements noted above. Handover from the advisory headteacher to the substantive headteacher was smooth and well managed. The school improvement officer has provided valuable support, for example in observing lessons jointly with leaders in order to validate their judgements. The local authority rightly intends to continue to provide support for the Early Years Foundation Stage.

As the school is now back on track in its journey out of special measures and the capacity to improve is considerably strengthened, the local authority should consider drawing up an exit strategy that sets out how support will diminish in the coming months.