

Tribal
1-4 Portland Square
Bristol
BS2 8RR

T 0300 123 1231
Text Phone: 0161 6188524 **Direct T** 0117 3115319
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk **Direct F** 0117 3150430
www.ofsted.gov.uk **Direct email:** matthew.parker@tribalgroup.com

4 October 2012

Mrs Lewis
Headteacher
Mrs Bland's Infant School
Jordans Lane
Reading
RG7 3LP

Dear Mrs Lewis

Notice to improve: monitoring inspection of Mrs Bland's Infant School

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 3 October 2012, and for the time you gave to our telephone discussion and planning meeting. Thank you also for the information which you provided before and during the inspection and for your engagement in joint lesson observations. Discussions with pupils, staff, three members of the governing body and a representative from the local authority were also very helpful in evaluating the progress the school has made. Please pass on my thanks to all concerned for the time they gave and for the welcome I received.

Since the previous inspection two full-time and one part-time teacher have left the school. A teacher has returned from maternity leave and two full-time teachers have joined the school. Three additional learning support assistants have been appointed. A new Chair of the Governing Body has been appointed from within the governing body.

As a result of the inspection on 12 January 2012, 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 is making inadequate progress in addressing the issues for improvement and in raising the pupils' achievement.

Pupils leave the Early Years Foundation Stage with skills above those expected for their age but their progress slows in Years 1 and 2. Unvalidated results from end of Key Stage 1 assessments in 2012 indicate that the proportion of pupils attaining the nationally expected levels rose to above average as a result of the school's focus in this area. However, the proportion attaining the higher Level 3 fell to well below average. Additionally, attainment in reading and writing fell, particularly at Level 3;

attainment in writing is particularly low. The school has set challenging targets for pupils' attainment; however, much of the progress pupils make in Key Stage 1 lessons is no better than satisfactory.

Teachers are now using assessment information to plan for the needs of the class; however, this is not precise enough so that sometimes the work is too easy particularly for the most able pupils. At other times it does not build on pupils' prior knowledge and understanding and therefore work is too challenging. Most teaching fails to inspire or excite pupils and consequently they fail to work hard. Usually pupils are told what they are going to learn but rarely why. Not enough lessons provide pupils with an exciting or motivating purpose for learning. Pupils find it hard to maintain concentration when they are listening for too long. It is often the case that there is too little involvement of pupils in the main teaching part of the lesson and teachers talk for too long. Conversely in a small group activity led by a learning support assistant good progress was made in learning the sounds letters make and valuable links were made to writing. The pupils were enthused and keen to learn more because teaching was stimulating and well matched to the pupils' needs. On some occasions, time is wasted when pupils move in and out of small groups for activities during lessons. This movement is not helpful either in ensuring pupils' focus during lessons. There are not enough examples of securely good teaching which can be shared to improve teaching significantly in Key Stage 1.

Some elements of teaching have improved, for instance marking and feedback to pupils are much more helpful in showing them how to improve their work and the next steps in learning. Teachers are beginning to make time for pupils to respond to marking but this is not a consistent feature. Teachers' assessments are becoming more secure as a result of inter-school moderation and the school is tracking pupils' progress more successfully now. The local authority ensured the validity of end of Key Stage 1 assessments when it independently moderated them and several assessments were revised. Despite these improvements, teaching is not securing the accelerated progress necessary for some of the pupils, particularly Year 2 pupils who have already fallen behind as a result of a legacy of weak teaching.

The school's systems to improve teaching are not rigorous enough. Leaders do not ensure that teachers know specifically how to improve their practice. Some evaluations of lessons are too generous, as confirmed through inspection activities, and most feedback to teachers lacks developmental areas for improvement. Other classroom observations provide only oral feedback which cannot be easily followed through to the next observation in order to check that matters have improved. Records of monitoring activities do not identify weaknesses alongside strengths; therefore, leaders cannot easily look for trends and common areas for development. Recently, some external lesson observations have provided useful feedback to teachers.

Pupils are polite, friendly and generally behave well in the playground and around the school. In lessons, however, pupils' behaviour for learning is less well developed.

In most lessons a significant minority of pupils find it hard to maintain concentration when, for example, they are not excited by the lesson or are not fully involved. Additionally, teachers' expectations are not made absolutely clear to pupils and teachers are often too tolerant of pupils talking, and talking over each other, instead of focusing on their work

New systems are in place to monitor the impact of the revised behaviour management systems. Incidents of poor behaviour, including hurting, are recorded carefully and followed up systematically, including with parents and carers. It is too early to evaluate if these incidents have reduced in frequency but leaders have identified individual pupils who are now receiving additional support as a result of this monitoring.

Attendance has improved as a result of effective partnerships with the local authority and targeted support for families with poor attendance.

The school's evaluation of the quality of teaching is too generous. Improvement plans have appropriate priorities and measureable success criteria. The governing body has an impressive understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses and has become increasingly rigorous since the previous full inspection. It now requests more detailed and regular progress and attainment data and is determined to challenge any underachievement. Governors are aware that the current Year 2 pupils need to make quick progress to ensure they leave the school with the basic skills required for the next stage of their education. Members of the governing body, including the newly appointed Chair of the Governing Body, are well placed to continue to challenge the school to improve and there is no complacency. Safeguarding checks meet statutory requirements.

The local authority's statement of action was deemed not fit for purpose because it lacked quantifiable targets for pupils' attainment and progress. It has recently been amended to include appropriately challenging targets and is now fit for purpose. The local authority has provided appropriate support to improve leadership through a link to a local school but its impact has been limited. Training and support to improve teaching and the leadership of mathematics have been effective in improving some elements of teaching including marking and feedback to pupils.

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

Michelle Winter
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in January 2012

- Improve the skills of leaders and managers at all levels and ensure that:
 - pupils' achievement improves, particularly in mathematics at Key Stage 1 and for higher-attaining pupils
 - the quality of teaching is monitored and reviewed more rigorously and best practice is shared more effectively
 - teachers' use of assessment information consistently informs lesson planning and improves classroom practice
 - teachers' marking in mathematics consistently guides pupils in their learning
 - behaviour management systems are monitored regularly and consistently applied.