

Tribal  
1-4 Portland Square  
Bristol  
BS2 8RR

**T** 0300 123 1231  
Text Phone: 0161 6188524  
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk  
[www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

**Direct T** 0117 3115319  
**Direct F** 0117 3150430  
**Direct email:** christina.bannerman @tribalgroup.com

11 June 2013

Mr Tim Browse  
Headteacher  
Cemetery Road  
Totterdown  
Bristol  
BS4 3DE

Dear Mr Browse

## **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Hillcrest Primary School**

Following my visit to your school on Tuesday 11 June, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the findings of my visit. Thank you for the help you gave me and for the time you made available to discuss the actions you are taking to improve the school since the most recent section 5 inspection.

The visit was the first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in February 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

### **Evidence**

During the visit, meetings were held with the headteacher, the Governing Body and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The school improvement plan was evaluated. HMI conducted a short joint lesson observation, a learning walk with the Literacy coordinator and with senior leaders, conducted a scrutiny of pupils' mathematics work.

### **Context**

All staff previously on temporary contracts are now employed on full time contracts. Since the last inspection a newly appointed teacher has taken on the subject leadership of Literacy. Governors have reconstituted the governing body and are in the process of appointing a new chair who is due take up the role from October 2013.

## **Main findings**

The senior leadership team have focused purposefully on improving the quality of teaching and learning. The school's development plan clearly sets out a range of actions to address the areas that require improvement. Senior leaders have increased the frequency of monitoring so that each teacher has a clearer understanding of the strengths in their teaching and areas for development. School records of lesson monitoring show that observations provide an overall judgement of achievement but do not provide specific guidance to teachers on how to accelerate the progress of all groups of pupils.

Middle leaders are playing an active part in improving the quality of teaching and learning and their work is underpinning the capacity of the leadership. Subject leaders have completed weekly monitoring of lesson planning for English and mathematics. They have helped to introduce a common planning format across the school that has helped to raise expectations. Teachers now plan a range of activities more frequently within a lesson and this is beginning to meet the needs of pupils of different abilities. The Literacy subject leader has introduced an initiative that is effectively encouraging pupils to produce better quality writing and is giving them clearer guidance on how to evaluate their work.

Since the last inspection senior leaders have developed systems to track pupils' progress across the school. Teachers complete assessments on pupils progress at set times during the year and this is now monitored and evaluated more closely. However, this information is not captured frequently enough to quickly identify any pupils making slower progress. As a result, the school's response is not sufficiently rapid to secure the essential knowledge and skills of those in danger of falling further behind. As yet the school's data is not being used effectively to compare pupils' progress in different classes within a single year group and evaluate teachers' performance.

In response to the last inspection the school has reviewed its marking policy and encouraged teachers to adopt common procedures across the school. However, scrutiny of pupils' work in mathematics show that marking across the school remains of variable quality and is not being used effectively by all teachers to adjust their planning. On occasion, misconceptions identified by teachers through their marking are not routinely followed up to ensure pupils develop their conceptual understanding and move on in their learning.

The local authority has provided specific training sessions that have helped governors to develop a clearer understanding of their roles and responsibilities. The headteacher and local authority have identified a clear timetable of specific monitoring events to enable governors to independently verify the effectiveness of the school's progress. Governors have begun to develop their understanding of national data and information but have been slow to undertake a more active role in

monitoring. An immediate priority for governors will be complete the monitoring events timetabled over the next academic year.

Senior leaders and governors are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection. The school should take further action to:

- sharpen the focus of work scrutiny and lesson planning and use the information gathered to improve the progress and achievement of different groups of pupils
- implement the planned timetable of monitoring so that governors are independently evaluating the performance of the school
- complete and record more frequent assessments of pupils' progress to more closely monitor and track progress and address variations across the year.

Ofsted may carry out further visits and, where necessary, provide further support and challenge to the school until its next section 5 inspection. HMI intends to return in the Autumn term to complete joint observations with senior leaders and meet with governors.

### **External support**

Local authority support has helped to bring stability and resolve temporary contracts for staff. They have provided regular support for the headteacher and this has resulted in a development plan that appropriately addresses the areas identified at the last inspection. They have provided training that has increased governors understanding of their responsibilities and raised their awareness of the need to more actively monitor the school's progress. A partnership of local headteachers has helped to validate senior leaders' judgements on the quality of teaching and have provided opportunities for staff to observe teaching and learning in other settings.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Bristol.

Yours sincerely

Mark Lindfield  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**