

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 311 5359  
**Direct F** 0117 315 0430  
**Email:** christina.bannerman@tribalgroup.com

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Mrs Ann Allison  
Executive Headteacher  
Park Mead Primary School  
Upper Dicker  
Hailsham  
BN27 3QP

Dear Mrs Allison

**Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Park Mead Primary School**

Following my visit to your school on 10 September 2013, 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 May 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

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 ensure that:

- the school development plan is regularly updated to show clearly progress made in tackling areas for improvement and the impact of each action
- planning and monitoring of teaching and learning close the gaps in attainment between girls and boys
- the curriculum and teaching fully challenge able pupils.

## **Evidence**

During the visit, meetings were held to discuss action taken since the last inspection with you as executive head, with the head of school, the Chair of the Governing Body and two governors, subject leaders for mathematics and English, and a representative of the local authority. I toured the site and visited each classroom with the head of school and met a group of Year 5 and Year 6 pupils. The school improvement plan was evaluated and minutes of governors' meetings since the last inspection reviewed. I looked at the 30 responses logged on the Parent View website.

## **Context**

Since the last inspection, two permanent teachers have been appointed, one with responsibility for Key Stage 2 and for English, the other with responsibility for mathematics and assessment. The school now has a full complement of substantive staff. Daily phonics sessions have been established, with groupings spread across Years 1 to 6 to reflect pupils' individual standards and progress. Building work has begun to upgrade the Foundation Stage class and office facilities.

## **Main findings**

The school action plan becomes well-structured and useful once it moves from general statements about areas for improvement to a systematic presentation of actions to be undertaken in response to each of the inspection recommendations. Those responsible for leading and monitoring the impact of initiatives are identified and the expected impact briefly outlined. While the school's leaders are clear that this is a working document, it is not being updated to show progress against the targets as the basis for the next planning cycle.

The Chair of Governors brings extensive and useful experience of school leadership and governance. The governing body is being restructured to focus its activities more directly on teaching and pupils' achievement. Where governors recognise that their ability to present informed challenge is limited, they are undertaking appropriate training. Governors are realistic about the challenge presented to this small school by local attitudes and limited involvement by parents and carers. At the time of this visit, Parent View showed nearly half of the 30 responses as negative about the quality of teaching, about the homework set and about information given to parents about their children's progress. Governors are responding constructively to the difficulty of changing these perceptions. Despite budget constraints, they have rightly invested in teaching, increasing the terms and conditions offered to attract good candidates after the initial recruitment process proved disappointing. Those appointed have quickly identified key points for improvement and have begun to

lead change; for example, daily phonics sessions have been introduced that are matched to pupils' individual levels rather than to age.

You and the head of school are leading well-targeted professional development for teachers and teaching assistants, with a focus on lesson planning, assessment and marking and on how to support pupils with special educational needs. Information about pupils' progress is being recorded and analysed more systematically and used to set appropriate priorities. These initiatives are beginning to make teaching and learning more engaging and effective, as pupils comment: 'We get challenged a lot more. We have more different types of learning – more exciting.' As you recognise, the quality of teaching is still, however, uneven.

Ofsted may carry out further visits and, where necessary, provide further support and challenge for the school until its next section 5 inspection.

### **External support**

The school is well supported by the local authority. Your engagement as executive headteacher has led to substantial improvement in the school's strategic planning. The local authority continues to monitor the school's progress and to provide targeted support through guidance from subject specialists and training for governors. The authority is also largely funding the programme of building works. The school benefits from participation in the local cluster of schools, drawing on the good practice of others. In addition, the school has a very positive relationship with the neighbouring independent day and boarding school, benefiting from its resources and expertise.

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

Yours sincerely

Patricia Metham  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**