

Tribal  
Kings Orchard, One Queen  
Street, Bristol  
BS2 0HQ

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 5323  
Direct email: [suzy.smith@tribalgroupp.com](mailto:suzy.smith@tribalgroupp.com)



1 May 2015

Mrs A Brackstone  
The Interim Executive Headteacher  
New Town Primary School  
School Terrace  
Reading  
RG1 3LS

Dear Mrs Brackstone

### **Special measures monitoring inspection of New Town Primary School**

Following my visit with James Waite, Additional Inspector, to your school on 29 and 30 April 2015, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave during the inspection and for the time you made available to discuss the actions which have been taken since the school's previous monitoring inspection.

The inspection was the second monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in October 2014. 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.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time:

The school is making reasonable progress towards the removal of special measures.

The local authority's statement of action is fit for purpose.

The school's action plan is fit for purpose.

The school may appoint newly qualified teachers in consultation with me.

This letter and monitoring inspection report will be published on the Ofsted website. I am copying this letter and the monitoring inspection report to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Reading.

Yours sincerely

Louise Adams  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Annex**

### **The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in October 2014**

- Improve teaching and learning by:
  - ensuring that teachers assess pupils' achievement accurately and use the information to plan tasks and activities to meet the full range of pupils' needs
  - raising teachers' expectations to provide high standards of challenge for all pupils, particularly the most able
  - providing activities, particularly in writing, that engage and interest pupils, especially boys
  - improving feedback to pupils so they know how to improve their work, and make sure that they respond to advice from teachers
  - check pupils' learning and provide activities to extend it still further
  - making sure that teachers' planning conveys a clear idea of what it is teachers want the pupils to learn.
- Make sure all pupils make good progress by:
  - improving pupils' reading skills, ensuring that pupils get a better grasp of how sounds are related to letters
  - providing purposeful activities in guided reading lessons, with a clear focus on improving skills in reading
  - improving the correct use of punctuation during writing activities
  - improving pupils' skills in solving mathematical problems.
- Improve behaviour by:
  - implementing the policies for managing behaviour consistently across the school
  - ensuring that pupils understand how they are expected to behave, and taking effective remedial action to improve behaviour where necessary.
- Improve the leadership and management of the school, including governance, by:
  - carrying out a thorough analysis of the school's work to identify weaknesses, and introduce measures to resolve them
  - using assessment information to find out which groups of pupils are underachieving, particularly those that are assessed as being disadvantaged, and to provide appropriate support to ensure that gaps are closing at a faster rate
  - developing the skills of the leaders at all levels to enable them to contribute to school improvement

- closely monitoring the quality of teaching, providing focused professional development, leading to a standard of teaching that is at least good throughout the school
- ensuring that governors develop the skills that help them to challenge school leaders more rigorously.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

## **Report on the second monitoring inspection on 29 and 30 April 2015**

### **Evidence**

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the interim executive headteacher, the acting head of school, other leaders, a group of pupils from Years 3, 4 and 5, members of the interim executive board (IEB) and a representative from the local authority. We visited lessons, spoke to pupils in class and looked at work in their books. We also observed play time and how pupils conduct themselves around school. The revised school improvement plan and local authority's statement of action were evaluated and documentation from leaders and the IEB was reviewed.

### **Context**

Since the last inspection the governing body has been replaced by an interim executive board. One of the temporary part-time deputy headteachers has left; the remaining deputy headteacher works two days each week. The school is looking to appoint a permanent, full-time deputy headteacher for September.

### **Achievement of pupils at the school**

Achievement is showing signs of improving in many year groups. In reading, writing and mathematics, many pupils in Key Stage 2 have made more progress than expected and are on track to achieve in line with other pupils nationally. However, specific groups of pupils, such as disadvantaged pupils, are not yet making the necessary progress to close the gaps between their attainment and that of their peers.

In Key Stage 1, progress is not improving as quickly. This is particularly the case for writing and mathematics. Among the main reasons for this is that some teachers are not clear enough about how to build up skills in these subjects.

School information on pupils' current achievements suggests that pupils are on track to achieve better in the standard assessment tests than pupils last year. More pupils are also on track to achieve the higher levels.

### **The quality of teaching**

Teaching has continued to improve since the monitoring inspection in January, although it has improved more rapidly in Years 5 and 6. Teachers are clearer about what needs to happen for teaching to be effective. For example, teachers plan more carefully what they intend the children to learn and make sure the activities link well to learning. As a result, in many lessons we observed, pupils were clear about the

purpose of the lesson and activity, and made more progress. Inconsistencies remain, however, as there are still teachers whose practice is weaker. Inspectors observed that when learning was less well planned, or linked less well to activities, pupils worked conscientiously but did not learn.

All teachers are assessing pupils' attainment accurately. Teachers have a good understanding of how to check pupils' learning. Their assessments have been moderated with teachers in other schools and are confirmed to be accurate by advisers from the local authority. In some classes, teachers use information about pupils' progress to help them organise activities which meet the needs of all the pupils in their class; however, this is not consistent.

Expectations in many areas are being raised. Teachers are increasingly aware of providing more complex work so that pupils have to put in greater effort. Pupils told inspectors that they are 'having to work harder'. However, the work which more able pupils are doing too often continues to lack challenge and does not enable them to develop their own thinking.

Teachers are much more skilled at checking how pupils make progress in lessons. Inspectors saw many occasions when teachers intervened to clarify the task or to discuss the learning, when they identified things were moving too slowly. In some lessons the feedback enabled the pupils to learn more; in others, adults helped pupils to complete the task, but did not take the opportunity to help them to understand better.

Teachers are more focused on providing feedback to pupils on their work, but marking and comments do not often help pupils understand how to improve their work or recognise the next steps in their learning.

There are signs of improvement in the teaching of writing, but it is still not being taught well enough in several classes. This is because teachers are not all clear about how to develop and practise the skills required for writing. In one class we saw the skills being taught well, but not being embedded. In another, we saw a limited range of writing which did not enable pupils to write in different styles. In Years 5 and 6, however, pupils' skills are developing faster and pupils are given a range of purposeful activities to enable them to build up their skills over time. As a result, most pupils in Years 5 and 6 are making better progress in their writing.

## **Behaviour and safety of pupils**

Staff now apply the behaviour management policy more consistently. This has resulted in pupils conducting themselves increasingly calmly and appropriately in lessons and around the school. Inspectors did note that pupils' conduct and engagement with learning are more variable when being taught or supervised by

teaching assistants, because their expectations of pupils' behaviour are not high enough.

Systems for recording class and playground behaviour incidents are now more rigorous. Staff recognise and tackle inappropriate behaviour incidents more effectively. Records of behaviour are robust and are now checked, analysed and followed up efficiently.

At present, whilst embedding good conduct, pupils are somewhat passive in lessons. This means that they do not seek to develop their own learning, nor challenge themselves.

### **The quality of leadership in and management of the school**

The interim executive headteacher and acting head of school have continued to drive improvements with focus and determination. They are clear about how to tackle the identified weaknesses and have demonstrated this well in the revised school action plan, which now helps everyone in the school to know what is happening and when.

Leaders' work to record, check and analyse information about pupils' progress is much improved. Inspectors could ascertain at a glance that the school knows which groups of pupils in each year group are not making the expected progress, and those for whom progress is accelerating. Leaders now hold teachers more effectively to account for their pupils' progress through half-termly pupil progress meetings. Where it is clear that groups of pupils in specific years are doing less well, leaders are taking steps to understand why.

Senior leaders sensibly check classroom practice regularly to identify how each teacher can improve. They have made a good impact on many fundamental elements of teaching, such as teachers being clear about what they want pupils to know. However, they need to consider more closely how well pupils are learning when making their judgements about teaching. The verbal and anecdotal feedback is helping teachers to improve, but the written evidence of this is not as detailed as it needs to be. In some cases, development points also need to be prioritised so that teachers can improve one or two aspects at a time.

Senior leaders recognise the development of leadership among a wider group of staff has not been rapid enough. Senior leaders have appropriately supported middle leaders, but should now expect these postholders to make more impact.

The recently appointed IEB is showing an improved capacity to provide governance. It understands the priorities for the school and for its role, with regular meetings well focused on carefully planned agendas, which relate closely to the school's priorities for improvement. The IEB is aware of the need to plan ahead for the permanent leadership of the school, so the work being done by the interim leaders is

sustained and developed. Since my last visit, the required review of the school's use of the pupil premium has been completed. The recommendations have been included in the school's action plan. A review of governance was not carried out because the decision was taken to appoint an IEB.

### **External support**

Advisers from the local authority are very supportive of senior leaders. Recently their main priority has been to help leaders improve the school action plan. The school has also received adviser support for reviewing and improving subject teaching. However, there is more to do in this area. The revised statement of action provides relevant detail about how each of the areas for improvement will be supported and links directly to the school's action plan.

Effective support has also been provided from St John's Church of England Primary School, which is the senior leaders' substantive school. Teachers have benefited from working closely with outstanding teachers and leaders to develop their understanding and skills.