



14 March 2007

Mr D Cruickshank
The Headteacher
St Stephen's Church of England Junior School
Lansdown Road
Kingswood
Bristol
BS15 1XD

Dear Mr Cruickshank

OFSTED MONITORING OF GRADE 3 SCHOOLS

Thank you for your cooperation when I monitored your school on 7 March 2007. I very much appreciated the discussions with you and your deputy, the documentation which you had assembled, the willingness of the staff to participate in the visit, and the courteous, good manners of the pupils during our break time discussions.

As a result of the inspection on 29 and 30 September 2005, the school was asked to improve:

- pupils' achievement in mathematics and science
- the consistency of teaching ensuring that lessons are more engaging for pupils.

Having considered a range of evidence, I am of the opinion that at this time the school is making satisfactory progress in addressing both these issues. Pupils enjoy coming to school and attendance is now slightly above the national average. They say they feel safe at school and recognise that behaviour is now more consistently good. There has been a welcome reduction in fixed term exclusions. Above all else, pupils say that they enjoy their lessons and the teachers are taking time to explain things more carefully.

At the time of the last inspection it was judged that the school demonstrated a good capacity for improvement. Subsequent progress has justified this confidence, although the rate of progress has not been as rapid as 'good capacity' might suggest. It was noted that there had been a number of staff changes in the period immediately prior to the inspection. There have been further changes during this current academic year with an experienced temporary headteacher and four new members of staff, three of whom are

new entrants to the profession, joining the school in September. This has had an impact on the continuity of development. Nevertheless, the staff commitment to improvement is high and the strategies which have been introduced are raising pupils' achievements.

Pupils' performance in the end of Key Stage 2 tests in 2006 demonstrates that the school's strategies for improvements in the quality of teaching are effective. Much better overall attainment in science was not matched by a similar rise in mathematics. However, teachers' assessments of current work shows that the present Year 6 pupils are predicted to attain standards in line with the national averages, including at the higher Level 5 in English and mathematics. This would represent a significant improvement and show that the school is successfully reducing underachievement. Regular monitoring and accurate analysis of data by the deputy headteacher enable tracking of identified groups of pupils who may be at risk of underachievement. These improvements to the school's systems for reviewing pupils' performance ensure a more consistent approach amongst teachers and are raising achievement.

A new system has been introduced for monitoring the quality of teaching and learning. This provides information for senior management which is used to guide staff training. It would be helpful for the school to concentrate on the criteria by which teaching and learning are described as 'good', and ensure that all observed lessons are judged against these criteria. Good practice in teaching is beginning to be shared more widely through peer observation and discussion. Recent staff development has focused on implementation of the 'assessment for learning' strategies. These strategies are beneficial in helping pupils to know how to make more rapid progress. There are some excellent examples of marking and feedback in pupils' books. There is not yet sufficient involvement of pupils in short term target setting and reflection on their next steps. The school is making pupil involvement a priority and is planning to give them better access to information about National Curriculum levels and exemplars.

The school is popular with parents and the roll continues to rise. With the impending change of a newly appointed, experienced headteacher from September 2007, it is recommended that this school is now inspected in the normal cycle. Particular attention should be given to the outcome of the 2007 national tests to note the extent to which the school meets its predicted targets.

I know from your comments that you have found the visit and our discussions helpful in promoting improvement in your school.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Peter Way', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Peter Way
Her Majesty's Inspector