

Prospects Learning Services Ltd
132-138 High Street
Bromley
Kent
BR1 1EZ

T 020 8313 7760
F 020 8464 3393

Ofsted helpline
08456 404045



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Mrs Christina Hibbins
The Headteacher
Cookham Rise Primary School
High Road
Cookham Rise
Maidenhead
SL6 9JF

Dear Mrs Hibbins

OFSTED MONITORING OF SCHOOLS WITH NOTICE TO IMPROVE

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school with Maggie Startup HMI on 30 November 2006, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during my visit. Please pass on my thanks to all the staff and pupils of Cookham Rise for their help and welcome during the visit and also to the chair of governors and adviser from the local authority who found time to meet with us at short notice.

At the time of the inspection on 16 May 2006, you had been in post as advisory headteacher for just two weeks. You were subsequently appointed as the permanent headteacher in July 2006.

As a result of the inspection in May 2006 the school was asked to:

- establish effective and sustainable leadership and management so that improvements are underpinned by clear planning and organisation,
- improve the use of performance data to track pupils' progress and set challenging targets,
- improve pupils' progress particularly in Key Stage 2 in English, mathematics and science,
- improve communication with parents by ensuring they are involved in the school evaluation.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time the school is making good overall progress in addressing the issues for improvement.

Good progress has been made in securing effective leadership and management for the school. The new headteacher has made a positive impact in a short time and has developed with staff clarity of vision for the future and raised staff morale. Pupils applaud the recent redecoration of parts of the school and wear their re-designed school uniforms with pride. The senior management team is making good use of finances to improve resources. Planning is robust and actions for improvement are kept under review. Senior staff have begun to support subject leaders in increasing the effectiveness of their work and their involvement in school self-evaluation, looking at the school as a whole and by subject or aspect. Great strides have been made in developing systems for assessing and evaluating pupils' work and achievements. Governors are clear about what constitutes success in terms of outcomes for pupils and have strengthened their role in challenging and supporting the school. Parents have a few concerns about the behaviour of a minority of children but say that discipline has improved. The school's capacity to improve is good.

The school has improved its systems for compiling and using data about pupils' attainment and for setting targets. It has introduced a commercial system for managing data and through this all teachers have a good grasp of their pupils' attainment at the start of each academic year and what is expected of pupils. The extent to which teachers make use of this information to plan tasks that will challenge pupils at the right level is still too variable and some pupils, particularly the most able, are not always given demanding enough work. Nevertheless, the work that staff have done on strengthening their capacity to make accurate assessments of attainment, coupled with the new system for keeping pupils' achievement under review, constitute good progress. In early December, the school plans to undertake a thorough analysis of pupils' progress since September to determine the extent to which it has improved. This analysis is carried out under the school's revised and good assessment policy.

In order to deal with the issue of improving pupils' progress, the school has rightly focused on raising the overall quality of teaching and learning in the school. Satisfactory progress has been made. The quality of teaching and learning are satisfactory overall with some good features, examples of which were seen in Year 6. Occasionally, pupils' progress is marred by unnecessary interruptions linked to some poorly managed school routines; these are being dealt with.

You have worked effectively with staff to set high expectations of the quality of teaching and staff understand these. The same good work has still to be done for learning. The check list of what constitutes high quality learning is not fully or clearly articulated, whereas for teaching, it is.

Children's attainment on entry is above average overall and pupils generally make satisfactory progress in Key Stage 1. The 2005 test results in Year 2 were above average and those in 2006 showed improvements in writing. Most

pupils achieved at least the expected level for 7-year olds. Test results in 2006, for pupils in Year 6, show a decline from 2005, continuing the downward trend since 2003. Results also show that pupils' progress from Years 3 to 6 was not fast enough. The school is working effectively to reverse the downward trend and current work shows that pupils have made satisfactory progress from September to the end of November. The school has put suitable actions into place to deal with underachievement in science although more work is needed to ensure that all pupils make up on previously lost ground, particularly in relation to conducting scientific enquiry.

Communication with parents is good. It has been improved effectively and parents appreciate this. Parents value the regular weekly newsletter and the workshops and seminars on specific topics. They also value the fact that you, as headteacher, are very visible and available to them. Parents feel well informed about children's progress and also about what they can do to help. The school has produced a good booklet for new parents and much of the content of this might also be useful to other parents.

The local authority provides good support. It acted in the last academic year to secure an advisory headteacher having seen the need to improve both provision and outcomes at the school. It continues to support the school through additional funding, the deployment of advisory staff who work with teachers on raising the quality of teaching and learning, in encouraging networking between local schools, and developing senior managers' and governors' effectiveness in their roles.

I hope that you have found the visit helpful in promoting improvement in your school. I wish you and the staff and governors all the very best in your work on improving the school and the outcomes for pupils.

Yours sincerely

Wiola Hola
Her Majesty's Inspector