

Tribal Group  
1-4 Portland  
Square  
Bristol  
BS2 8RR  
T 0845 123 6001  
F 0845 123 6002

T 08456 40 40 40  
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk  
[www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)



10 December 2007

Ms S Machin  
The Headteacher  
King Charles Primary School  
Wilkes Avenue  
Bentley  
Walsall  
West Midlands  
WS2 0JN

Dear Ms Machin

**SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF KING CHARLES  
PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Following my visit to your school on 28 and 29 November 2007, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the third monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures in October 2006. The monitoring inspection report is attached and the main judgements are set out below.

Progress since being subject to special measures – good.

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – satisfactory.

Newly qualified teachers may be appointed subject to confirmation with HMI.

This letter and monitoring inspection report will be posted on the Ofsted website. Please inform the Regional Inspection Service Provider of any factual inaccuracies within 24 hours of the receipt of this letter.

I am copying this letter and the monitoring inspection report to the Secretary of State, the chair of governors and the Director of Education Walsall.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Brian Cartwright".

Brian Cartwright  
H M Inspector

Report from the third monitoring inspection: 28 and 29 November 2007

## Evidence

I observed the school's work, scrutinised documents, met with the headteacher, consultant headteacher, the chair of governors of the federation, Education Walsall staff, teaching staff, parents and pupils.

## Context

The school federated with Bentley West Primary school at the start of September 2007. There is a single governing body with oversight of both schools. The headteacher of King Charles Primary retains accountability for the school and its staff. Redecoration of classrooms and the school's reception area has lifted the quality of the learning environment. The local family learning facility has been relocated to King Charles in refurbished accommodation. The school runs a nurture centre for pupils with emotional, social and behavioural difficulties that attend other local schools. It has found recruiting to a part time vacancy at this centre difficult, which is limiting the outreach work of the unit.

Despite successful federation in September 2007, the governors are disappointed that financial support for this venture has not been forthcoming. They and Education Walsall were led to believe some £200,000 had been made available for other federations. As a result, plans to modernise the inadequate information and communication technology (ICT) provision at King Charles have not been able to proceed. The lack of effective ICT infrastructure for teaching and learning is hampering progress in raising standards.

## Achievement and standards

Results of the 2007 national tests show encouraging signs of improvement. In particular, the measures of progress compared to similar schools between Key Stage 1 and 2 are no longer significantly lower than average overall. Standards in both key stages are rising and are broadly in line with national averages. Key Stage 2 attainment is higher than at any time in the previous five years. However, within this positive picture are two particular aspects of remaining concern. Firstly, the proportion of pupils gaining the higher National Curriculum levels, in both key stages, is still too low. This is most acute for Key Stage 2 mathematics, which is the weakest of the core subjects. The school has identified that, despite extra 'springboard' catch up lessons, too many girls did not make the expected progress. The reasons behind this may lie in a legacy of staff turbulence in previous years, which has resulted in pupils lacking confidence despite their actual abilities in the subject.

The standards of most pupils' current work are generally appropriate for their age. There are some good examples of high demand work in younger classes worthy of note. Literacy skills are better developed than numeracy, although spelling remains a

relative weakness. The volume of extended and independent writing across different subjects is now high and this work is well marked for literacy corrections. The intrinsic numeracy skills of pupils are actually better than their written responses to test questions would suggest. Pupils can do the tasks assigned, but are prone to making simple errors that they do not notice until they are pointed out. They can swiftly resolve the problem correctly once prompted to check their original working.

The school has good term by term evidence of pupil progress in all years and in all classes. This is used well by teachers in planning, and by school managers in monitoring individual pupil progress. This data shows that achievement is better in English than in mathematics and that both are at least satisfactory overall.

### Personal development and well-being

Pupils of all ages speak positively about the school and say that they felt safe. The school council's work is appreciated by pupils, with its current interest focused on trying to improve choice in the school dinners provided. Pupils say that the school swiftly and effectively deals with bullying if it occurs. Children enjoy their lessons and older pupils, in particular, note how marking is now much better and more helpful as far as guiding improvements to their work. They know their academic targets and current working levels and can explain what they need to focus on to reach those targets.

Attendance is still well below national averages but it is improving. It is worse amongst younger pupils, and the school is developing work with their parents as part of a long term strategy to change the casual attitude that some families have to school attendance. The family learning centre is one strand in this approach. Good work in partnership with Education Walsall staff is having a positive impact, and the school is seen to be doing all it reasonably can in the shorter term to improve attendance.

### Quality of provision

Teaching seen during my visit was predominantly good. Lessons now start briskly, with pupils assigned to the main tasks in good time. These tasks are differentiated carefully, such that, for the main activities of a lesson, pupils are being challenged at an appropriate and demanding enough level for them to make good progress. This explicit differentiation is sometimes also evident in whole class discussions, but sometimes these sessions do not fully include learners of all abilities.

Marking quality has improved substantially, with some excellent practice consistently being delivered in literacy across the school. Marking for numeracy is at least satisfactory, although there is less evidence of teacher pupil dialogue leading to explicit extra practice, compared to literacy. There are some inconsistencies, mainly due to interruptions in staff continuity. This is an area that needs careful monitoring given the risk of continuing staff absence in some classes. All pupils of all ages receive regular homework, which is marked carefully.

The curriculum is adequate in meeting pupil needs, with good evidence of teachers exploiting cross-curricular links, particularly in literacy. The school is working on a curriculum review jointly with Bentley West staff, as part of the federation, in order to pool expertise and resources. This would be easier if the ICT infrastructure permitted sharing of planning and materials between the schools and between teachers.

Care, guidance and support is at least satisfactory, with a recently introduced 'Every Child Matters' meeting for every pupil ensuring that otherwise 'ordinary' pupils are not slipping through the net. This is a strong feature. Performance analysis evidence shows that children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD) are making better progress than for schools in similar contexts. There is a strong network of classroom support staff who are integral to the learning of the pupils in their classes.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in October 2006:

- raise standards and accelerate the rate of pupils' progress by using time more effectively, raising teachers' expectations and ensuring that guidance for pupils, including marking, is more precise – satisfactory.

#### Leadership and management

There is now a substantial and very thorough system of monitoring and evaluation involving staff at all levels on a weekly basis. This provides secure information about every child's progress and feedback on the quality of teaching and learning. The roll out of training for middle leaders is proceeding according to the Education Walsall action plan. These colleagues are already conducting rigorous book trawls and working alongside classroom colleagues. This represents a step change up from a year ago. The sharing of performance data between staff has been a crucial step in engaging them all on contributions to improving standards, and is also providing clear evidence of that improvement to the school.

The continued embedded support by the consultant headteacher, a new substantive deputy headteacher, and the empowerment of middle managers, are effectively raising standards. Parents report a better school, a better learning environment, and increasing confidence in the school. Governance, under the new federation arrangements, is business like and accurately informed by detailed school performance reports.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in October 2006:

- with the full involvement of senior managers and coordinators, implement rigorous monitoring and evaluation that focuses clearly on pupils' learning in lessons and their progress over time – good.

#### External support

Education Walsall continues to provide good support and is moving from a direct training role to a more detailed coaching and support role for classroom teachers, as

per the action plan. The federation has ensured the long term support and joint working arrangements with the partner primary school. Both parties are reporting benefits as a result. For example, subject coordinators at King Charles have been trained in monitoring and evaluation by working with Bentley West and Education Walsall colleagues on that site.

There is a shared sense of frustration with school governors that this federation has not brought any noticeable financial benefits to the two schools despite substantial funding to earlier federations. ICT provision at King Charles is not yet good enough to support rapid pupil progression, shared staff development and planning, or the sharing of teaching resources.

#### Priorities for further improvement

- Identify and resolve reasons for the relative underachievement of pupils, particularly girls, in mathematics.