

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

T 08456 40 40 40
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk

Direct T 020 8313 7760
Direct F 020 8464 3393



20 December 2007

Mr Simon Rose
The Headteacher
Stone Church of England Combined School
Oxford Road
Stone, Aylesbury
HP17 8PD

Dear Mr Rose

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 13 December 2007, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during my visit. Please extend my thanks to the staff, pupils, governors and school improvement partner.

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

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

- raise the quality of teaching, including the pace, challenge and teachers' expectations
- provide better links between subjects and more opportunities for pupils to use literacy and numeracy
- improve subject leadership and the role governors play in checking on how well the curriculum challenges and interests pupils.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time the school is making good progress in addressing the issues for improvement and in raising pupils' achievement. The school has worked very hard and successfully since the inspection to establish procedures that are accelerating pupils' progress.

The school has made good progress in raising the quality of teaching. This has been achieved through a range of strategies, including bringing in outside help to coach staff and enabling teachers to observe good practice in other schools. A new system to track pupils' progress is assisting teachers to analyse data and draw conclusions about pupils' needs. In addition, the introduction of a new assessment system is helping to raise teachers' expectations of what their pupils can achieve. Pupils feel that lessons are always interesting. Their involvement in understanding what they are trying to learn, and in assessing their own achievement, is helping the teachers to plan well-matched work that challenges pupils successfully. This process is now

being extended beyond English, mathematics and science, to all subjects. The good pace which is maintained in most lessons helps to sustain pupils' interest and enables them to work productively. As a result of these initiatives, pupils' progress is accelerating. This resulted last year in improved standards in both Year 2 and Year 6. Although standards by Year 6 remained below average and there is still some underachievement, pupils' current work shows that they are making good progress.

The school has made good progress in improving its curriculum. All of the staff have been involved in revising the curriculum to make it more creative and interesting for pupils. This has resulted in their greater enjoyment of learning. Pupils report that teachers make lessons fun. Opportunities to apply skills in literacy and numeracy to other subjects, such as writing in history or mathematics in science, are now planned systematically. Similarly, the curriculum is being enriched by links that are being forged between subjects, such as those made between geography, English and science in a recent seaside study. As it develops the curriculum, the school is rightly evaluating the effectiveness of the creative elements, and is making modifications in the light of experience. The use of specialist teachers, more educational visits and visitors to school add to the richer curriculum. All of these changes have increased enthusiasm for teaching and learning and this is having a positive effect on pupils' standards and progress.

The school has made good progress in sharpening the skills of curriculum leaders and those of governors in monitoring the curriculum. Significant guidance and support have been provided to help subject leaders to understand their responsibilities and to enhance their skills. They have gradually improved their roles during the year, supporting colleagues, analysing pupils' progress and identifying where intervention is needed. They have written appropriate development plans for their subjects and are monitoring their implementation. Some leaders have observed lessons to monitor teaching and learning, and these skills are currently being extended to all staff.

Governors have received training and are now better informed about their roles and responsibilities. They are suitably involved in revising the curriculum. They have established a separate committee to monitor the curriculum and have increased their links with subject leaders. They are now becoming more involved in evaluating how well the school is doing and in planning for improvement.

The LA has supported the school effectively through these changes and it has recently removed the school from its 'concern' category. New developments have been very effectively led by the headteacher and senior staff who have, together, created a strong sense of team work. All staff and governors are aware that much remains to be done, but there is clear determination, supported by robust planning, to continue the school's improvement.

I hope that you have found the visit helpful in promoting improvement in your school.

Yours sincerely
Vanessa Ward
Additional Inspector