

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



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Mr E Mcmorrow
The Headteacher
St Gregory's Catholic Primary School
Grange Road
Northampton
Northamptonshire
NN3 2BD

Dear Mr Mcmorrow,

Ofsted monitoring of schools with a Notice to Improve

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 12 September 2007, for the time you gave to our phone discussions, and for the information which you provided before and during my visit. The warm welcome that I received was much appreciated. Please pass on my thanks to the chair of governors, the teachers who were observed, and the staff and pupils who took the time to speak to me.

This letter 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.

As a result of the inspection on 29 and 30 January 2007, the school was asked to:

- improve progress in mathematics in Years 3 to 6 by allowing enough time for teaching the subject and ensuring that teachers consistently meet the differing needs of all pupils
- monitor provision more rigorously and frequently to check that it is improving quickly enough
- ensure that teachers make better use of assessment information to plan work that always builds on what pupils already know.

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 the pupils' achievement.

Central to the good progress being made is the effective leadership of the headteacher. Your steadfast drive for improvement sets a clear direction for the school. A strong and dedicated senior management team supports you well and a strong sense of teamwork has been forged amongst all staff, along with a firm commitment to raising pupils' achievement.

Good progress has been made in improving the rate of progress in mathematics for pupils in Years 3 to 6. The enthusiasm and dedication of the subject coordinators has been the cornerstone on which this success has been built. They have effectively overseen the introduction of a range of initiatives to improve provision over the last few months. For instance, the curriculum has been amended so that all pupils now have a numeracy lesson each day. Planning has been improved to ensure teachers set work that now effectively challenges pupils of different abilities. Data analyses focus effectively on enabling early identification of pupils requiring additional support and interventions to be set in place to meet their needs. This has led to a dramatic improvement in the attainment of underperforming pupils. Although the Year 6 test results in 2007 were disappointing, this was due to a legacy of underachievement of these pupils. The levels of attainment of pupils currently in Year 6 indicate a stronger picture for the end of year tests in 2008. Throughout Years 3 to 6, pupils are now making satisfactory progress.

There has been good progress made in the way that the school monitors provision in mathematics. Previously, the progress that pupils made was only checked at the end of the year. This did not enable ongoing adjustments to be made. Progress is now checked termly by internal tests and on a regular basis by book scrutinies and observations of lessons. This means any underperformance of individual pupils can be identified early and action taken to provide extra support. The data obtained from monitoring is shared with staff and used to set targets that pupils are expected to achieve. This has led to teachers being more accountable for the progress that pupils make in their classes. This model of monitoring is being introduced into other subjects to strengthen provision further.

Good progress has been made on the way teachers use assessment information to plan their work. As a result, planning has improved because teachers are clear about what pupils have learned before and what they will learn in the next class. This avoids the duplication of learning that happened previously. At the start of the school year, the new teacher uses assessment information from the previous year to set work that builds on prior learning and matches pupils' individual needs. These improvements are not unique to mathematics but are incorporated into other subjects. The introduction of an all school approach to calculation in mathematics is another example of how the school has improved continuity of learning from year to year. Teachers are now aware of the methods to be used and pupils are not confused by different approaches when they change classes.

The local authority is providing good support for the school. The work of the school improvement partner and local authority advisers and consultants has had a positive impact in improving teaching and learning and the progress that pupils make in mathematics. The school is not complacent and knows there is more to do, such as involving pupils more effectively in assessing how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve.

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

Yours sincerely

Melvyn Hemmings
Additional Inspector