

Tribal Group
1-4 Portland
Square
Bristol
BS2 8RR

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



20 March 2008

Mrs R Popat
The Headteacher
The Abbey Primary School
Winchester Road
Northampton
Northamptonshire
NN4 8AZ

Dear Mrs Popat

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 11 March 2008, for the time you gave to our phone discussions, and for the information which you provided before and during my visit. Please convey my thanks to all staff, pupils and governors.

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 11 and 12 July 2007, the school was asked to:

- raise standards by improving teaching in Years 3 to 6.
- ensure assessment data is accurate and is used effectively to make sure work matches pupils' needs and challenges them appropriately
- ensure that all managers and governors check the school's performance rigorously to improve achievement in all subjects and all classes.

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.

Since the inspection in July 2007, two assistant headteachers and two Key Stage 2 team leaders have been appointed. In addition, five teaching assistants have been appointed. The school benefits from the effective support of the local authority School Improvement Partner and subject consultants. The local authority statement of action has ensured that the school receives sufficient challenge and support so that the progress made has been good.

The latest results in the 2007 national tests, which were taken before the last inspection, show that pupils' achievement and standards at Key Stages 2 are below average. School assessment information and a scrutiny of the pupils' work indicate

that progress since the last inspection has accelerated and is bridging the gap between school standards and national expectations. Standards are rising in Years 5 and 6, but remain below average because of inadequacies in teaching experienced by the pupils in the past. In Years 3 and 4, standards are now broadly in line with national expectations.

Generally, teaching has improved considerably in English and mathematics since the inspection. Improvements in science have been slower because the school has rightly prioritised the need to improve literacy and numeracy. Pupils report that lessons are much more fun and interesting. Teachers are now providing greater challenge for more able pupils through initiatives such as ability grouping. However, some pupils report that the work could be even harder. Expectations of pupils have risen considerably and a particularly strong feature of teaching is the involvement of pupils in class discussions encouraged by skilled questioning. Pupils have a much greater awareness of the purpose of their lessons and what it is they are expected to achieve. This is due in part to the improvements in lesson planning. The recently revised marking policy is being applied consistently across the school providing pupils with useful guidance on the next steps they need to take to improve their work.

Procedures for checking the work of pupils have improved so that teachers are fully aware of the progress they are making. Teachers are making much greater use of assessment information to inform their planning. They are more successful at pitching work at the correct level for all groups of pupils. Effective use is being made of assessment information to identify different groups of pupils who need extra help with English and mathematics. Assessment information is being well used to provide pupils with targets to guide them with their work. Pupils report these are helpful and talk with confidence about the progress they are making.

The headteacher gives a very strong lead and is driving school improvement relentlessly. She now receives much more effective support from other school leaders. Morale is high and school leaders share a common goal to improve teaching and learning. Subject leaders have benefited from the effective support of local authority consultants and are now rigorously checking assessment information, lesson planning and pupils' work. School leaders are effective in ensuring that recommendations for improvements in teaching are being applied consistently across the school. Subject leaders have not yet had sufficient opportunities to check the progress of pupils in lessons. Governance has strengthened so that governors are more knowledgeable and are asking searching questions about the information they are given. Governors have taken advantage of local authority training so that they are better placed to check the work of the school.

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

Yours sincerely

Tim Bristow
Her Majesty's Inspector