

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



22 January 2008

Mr P Talbot
The Headteacher
Castle Hill Community Primary School
Sidney Street
Folkestone
Kent
CT19 6HG

Dear Mr Talbot

Fresh Start: Monitoring Inspection of Castle Hill Community Primary School

Introduction

Following my visit to your school on 16 and 17 January 2008, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the first monitoring inspection since the school opened in January 2007.

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

Evidence

During the visit 10 parts of lessons and an assembly were observed. A range of documents were scrutinised and meetings were held with members of the senior leadership team, the chair of governors, pupils and the School Improvement Partner (SIP). Samples of pupils work were also examined.

Context

Castle Hill opened as a Fresh Start school in January 2007. There are 296 pupils on roll and 51 children in the nursery. The school serves an area that has high levels of social and economic disadvantage and the number of pupils eligible for free school meals is high. More pupils than average join and leave the school at different times during the year, including asylum seekers and migrant workers from Eastern Europe. A Sure Start children's centre is attached to the school. The school has responsibility for the management of the nursery and after school club at the centre and also

provides a range of extended services to support parents and families. The percentage of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities (LDD) is high. There is provision for profoundly deaf and hearing impaired pupils aged 3 to 11. The new headteacher was appointed from 1 September 2006 to manage the transition to the new school. Two teachers and most of the teaching assistants and communicators from the predecessor school were appointed to the new school. All other teachers and the senior leaders were newly appointed. Following this initial change staffing has been stable. An assistant headteacher with responsibility for early years and children and a newly qualified teacher took up post in September 2007. There is a full complement of governors. The chair of governors was vice-chair of the interim governing body and involved in the appointments of all staff to the new school.

Achievement and standards

The school's own evaluation identifies that few pupils enter the school with the skills and knowledge expected for their age and that standards are too low throughout the school. A system to track the progress every pupil makes through regular assessments has been established. Although it shows that there has been some improvement in the progress pupils are making, there are inconsistencies across the school. Much remains to be done to address the legacy of underachievement by all groups of pupils regardless of their needs or abilities. Pupils made satisfactory or better progress in the large majority of lessons seen. In three lessons progress was inadequate because tasks were not matched well enough to pupils' needs.

Personal development and well-being

Pupils say that they feel safe and well cared for. Behaviour has improved because there is a clear and consistently implemented behaviour policy which is understood by the pupils. Challenging or inappropriate behaviour is dealt with effectively and the number of pupils excluded has been halved from the number in the predecessor school. Pupils say that behaviour has improved because teachers are stricter. Behaviour seen in lessons was well managed and at least satisfactory. Pupils generally have positive attitudes to learning and work well together. In the Reception class, children develop confidence and independence because there are well established routines and they are given good opportunities to make choices and take responsibility for the equipment they have used. Most pupils say that they enjoy their lessons, particularly the ones where they have practical opportunities to be actively involved. They enjoy taking on responsibility such as being on the school council, helping in the library, and being 'playground pals'. Despite a range of appropriate action to improve attendance, it remains an issue for the school and is below average. The school is targeting specific support at an identified group of pupils with poor attendance levels.

Quality of provision

The school's own monitoring records of teaching since the school opened identifies that most is satisfactory or better. Five lessons seen during the monitoring visit were satisfactory and two were good. Typically in lessons, the learning objective was

shared and relationships were good so pupils were keen to participate, behaved well and were attentive. Interactive whiteboards were used to enliven lessons and interest pupils. In the best lessons pupils worked productively and made good progress because practical tasks were carefully matched to their different needs, expectations were clear, and good adult interactions motivated and encouraged pupils. However, the pace of learning seen was inconsistent and slowed when tasks did not provide sufficient challenge to fully engage pupils. Although speaking and listening is a whole school focus for development, some lessons were over directed by the teacher resulting in missed opportunities for pupils to extend and develop their ideas.

Each class is supported by a number of additional adults, but the impact they had on learning was inconsistent because they were not used effectively in all parts of the lesson, particularly whole class activities. Pupils' work is marked regularly and praises the effort pupils make. In the books seen some comments identified pupils' success in achieving the lesson objective, but there was inconsistency in the use of marking to help pupils know precisely what they need to do to improve and achieve their targets in reading, writing and mathematics.

The curriculum has been developed to provide relevant and practical learning opportunities through the introduction of the International Primary Curriculum in September 2007. This topic based approach has contributed to the pupils' enjoyment of learning. It has been planned carefully to ensure that all aspects of the National Curriculum are covered appropriately. Monitoring the implementation of this initiative is in place, but its impact on raising standards and accelerating achievement is yet to be evaluated. Discrete guided reading sessions have been introduced, in addition to the daily literacy lessons, to address pupils' low level literacy skills. A weekly session takes place in Year 1 to develop speaking and listening. However, where these sessions were observed they were not carefully planned, which hindered the progress pupils made. The school has invested in new computers. There is a well equipped computer suite and a laptop with portable wireless access for every pupil in Year 5 and 6. Pupils were seen using these confidently in lessons. There is a good range of after school and lunchtime clubs which the pupils enjoy and these also make a good contribution to their personal development and well-being. Some pupils have been given the opportunity to learn British Sign Language through an accredited course.

Systems have been established to identify accurately the needs of pupils with LDD and those who speak English as an additional language (EAL). Individual education plans are in place and reviewed regularly. Parents are better informed about the support their child is receiving. The organisation of additional support and interventions has been modified appropriately and teaching assistants are receiving more focused and relevant training. The impact of their work is monitored through observation and pupil tracking. Targeted interventions have focused on those pupils attaining below nationally expected levels but the needs of other underachieving groups, including the more able, are not being identified to inform planning and support.

Leadership and management

The headteacher, senior leadership team and governors have a clear vision for improvement but are aware they need to rapidly accelerate the rate of progress pupils make. Systematic assessment and monitoring to track the progress pupils make and improve the quality of teaching and learning have been established, but need to be used more robustly to increase the pace of improvement.

Governors have a schedule of regular visits and are linked to particular year groups. This is increasing their understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. Middle leaders have developed annual action plans and five are attending training to develop their leadership skills, but their role in improving the standards and achievement in their subject is not yet fully developed.

The school plan for improvement is focused on the appropriate priorities. However, success criteria are not consistently specific or sharply focused on how the impact of actions to improve teaching, learning and achievement will be measured.

External support

The local authority has provided an appropriate range of support. The work of advanced skills teachers has had a positive impact on improving the quality of teaching and learning in targeted year groups. Outreach support from local schools for pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties (EBD) and moderate learning difficulties (MLD) has helped the school to meet the needs of pupils better with these specific needs. The SIP is aware that the percentage of good or better teaching needs to be increased to accelerate the progress pupils make.

Main Judgements

The school's overall progress is satisfactory.

Priorities for further improvement

- Increase the pace of learning and the level of challenge in lessons for all pupils, particularly the more able.
- Use assessment and tracking information more robustly to accelerate the progress pupils make.
- Ensure planning for improvement and evaluation is sharply focused on achievement and how it will be measured.
- Develop the leadership of middle managers so that they have an impact on improving achievement, teaching and learning.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the chair of governors and the Director of Education for Kent.

Yours sincerely

Jacqueline Krafft
H M Inspector of Schools