

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



3 July 2008

Mr N Harris
The Headteacher
Colyton Primary School
The Butts
West Street
Colyton
Devon
EX24 6NU

Dear Mr Harris

SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF COLYTON PRIMARY SCHOOL

Following my visit with Denise Franklin, Additional Inspector, to your school on 2 July 2008, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the second monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures in November 2007. The monitoring inspection report is attached and the main judgements are set out below.

Progress since being subject to special measures – satisfactory.

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – satisfactory.

Newly qualified teachers may not be appointed.

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 Chief Education Officer for Devon.

Yours sincerely

Laurie Lewin
Additional Inspector

SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING OF COLYTON PRIMARY SCHOOL

Report from the second monitoring inspection: 2 July 2008

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents, and met with the headteacher, staff, a group of pupils drawn from across the school and the chair of governors.

Context

The school has a new substantive headteacher who took up the post at the beginning of the summer term. A new teacher took over the Year 1/Year 2 class at the beginning of the summer term. The deputy headteacher and the Year 6 class teacher will be leaving at the end of this term. After the school's inspection in November 2007, the number of pupils on roll declined. However, the roll has now stabilised.

Achievement and standards

Staff recognise that there remains a significant level of underachievement across the school, particularly in Years 3 to 6. Nonetheless, training and support from the local authority, through the intensive support programme and the raising attainment plan, are showing clear signs of impact. The quality of work in lessons and in pupils' books is better than that seen during the previous visit.

The new headteacher has moved ahead rapidly with ensuring that a full range of good quality data is collected to show pupils' progress and attainment as clearly as possible. This data confirms the picture of improving achievement. Lesson observations mirror what the data is showing, with good progress being made by children in the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1. As a result, standards are now above average by the end of Year 2. Standards and pupils' progress have also improved at Key Stage 2, with assessment information and samples of pupils' work showing some good progress being made over the last term. However, this is not a consistent picture and pupils still have much to do to catch up. This is particularly the case in Year 3 where pupils' progress has remained unsatisfactory over the last term. The school is injecting much support into this year group to strengthen the teaching and support for pupils. There are early signs of improvement, with pupils now better challenged and more focused on the work they do. Early indications from recently completed national tests, the teachers' assessment and work in pupils' books are that standards at Year 6 are slightly below the nationally expected level, but better than they were at this time last year. Standards are lower in writing than in reading and mathematics and progress is also less strong in writing. Evidence from observations and pupils' books indicates that higher attaining pupils are not always sufficiently challenged by the work they do.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in November 2007:

- raise pupils' achievement and standards, especially in English and mathematics – satisfactory.

Personal development and well-being

Attitudes to learning have improved since the last visit. Pupils behave well. They enjoy what they are doing and show good levels of motivation. When asked how they felt about recent changes in the school, some of the pupils said, 'Our work used to be boring but now it's a lot more interesting.' They also commented how much they liked and appreciated their new headteacher. An atmosphere of calm, purposeful activity is prevalent around the school along with a lively, happy atmosphere in lessons and at break times. This important shift in the mood around the school is a key component in helping staff improve pupils' academic progress because it is helping to provide an environment in which pupils have a desire to learn. The playground is a busy place with lots to keep everyone occupied. Relationships are good and everybody gets on well together. Improvements noted during the last visit have been sustained and built on further. Pupils have picked up on the fact that adults in the school are actively engaged in improving things, and this is translated into an air of optimism and confidence that pupils project in the way they talk and go about their work. Pupils feel their opinions are now valued to a greater extent than previously and they feel that, through the school council, they have recently become more involved in the school's development. In this way they are improving their understanding about how they can make an effective contribution towards the world around them.

Quality of provision

Teaching has improved since the last monitoring visit and there is now much more good teaching. This is reflected in the assessment information that shows an upturn in pupils' progress. Teachers have responded well to the advice and support from the local authority. Lesson observations show they have sharpened the way they question pupils and the way they involve individuals in discussions so that learning is becoming a much more interactive experience for pupils. The newly upgraded system for recording progress has given teachers much greater clarity about the pupils' achievements. Clear targets are now set to show the levels that pupils are expected to reach. This has resulted in teachers having higher expectations for pupils' achievement. Teachers also know which pupils are achieving well and who needs extra support to accelerate their progress more. Teachers are making better use of assessment information to inform their lesson planning. This shows in the detailed plans seen in classrooms, the clarity of the different activities, and the way in which teaching assistants are deployed effectively to support groups or individuals. However, these positive traits are not yet fully consistent across the school. Assessment/tracking data for Year 3 pupils in particular shows that learning is still too slow in this class. Work set, especially in mathematics for this year group, is not always pitched at a high enough level for many of the pupils and the pace does not always move along rapidly enough. Nonetheless, improvement is underway, with pupils now well managed and better focused on activities than was previously the case.

Across the school, improvements have been made in the way that teachers use assessment information to set curriculum targets for pupils. However, despite some good overall development in implementing the right kind of systems to aid teachers' analysis, this area is still 'work in progress'. There remains variability between classes as to whether pupils know about and understand the targets set for them. Also, whilst appropriate class and group targets are set, target setting for individual pupils is still weak. As a result, higher attaining pupils in particular are not always challenged enough. Marking of pupils' work is not as good as it should be. This area of teachers' work has not improved enough since the last monitoring visit. While books are generally marked on a regular basis, teachers are not giving pupils a clear enough steer on precisely what is needed to improve their work in the future. Where comments are made, these are not always followed up. As a result, pupils do not always correct their mistakes and sometimes carry on working in the same way. The marking policy introduced earlier in the year is not being effectively implemented.

Teachers engage pupils well, in the main. They have worked hard to make their presentations and explanations more lively and interesting. The pupils appreciate this and respond with increased enthusiasm. However, despite these good efforts to brighten up the work, some activities remain rather lacklustre. This is because the curriculum planning, which is heavily reliant on national guidelines, has not been sufficiently well adapted to suit the needs of the pupils. For example, not enough attention is given to the needs of more able pupils and some work seen with writing in Year 5 did not match the needs and interests of boys.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in November 2007:

- ensure greater consistency in the quality of teaching and support, improving particularly the way teachers engage pupils' interest and match learning to their individual needs – satisfactory
- use assessment of pupils' attainment and progress more effectively to raise the expectations of staff, set appropriately challenging targets and show pupils how to improve – satisfactory.

Leadership and management

Since taking up his post, the new headteacher has done much to help the school improve. He has rapidly gained an understanding of what is working successfully and where improvement is needed. Staff are working effectively with the headteacher in tackling weaknesses. He has set up a good working atmosphere and has rapidly gained the confidence of all staff and governors. He has worked well to create better relationships with parents through strategies such as weekly coffee mornings and regularly newsletters. Importantly, he has streamlined and upgraded the systems for tracking pupils' progress. Teachers now have the essential tools at their disposal to measure performance and analyse where extra intervention, support and adjustment to their lesson planning is required. Governors have also moved quickly to create more organised and efficient systems for running meetings and monitoring and evaluating the work of the school. However, there is no programme to ensure they monitor work in lessons on a regular basis. All of the positive traits mentioned here, along with the sound improvement in improving pupils' achievement, show that the school's capacity for improvement has been strengthened. There is now a good level

of 'joined up thinking' and team work. The staff and governors now project a much greater degree of confidence, enthusiasm and commitment to move the school forward than was evident at the time of the last monitoring visit. The headteacher and governors have clear plans to manage the forthcoming changes in teaching staff.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in November 2007:

- strengthen leadership and management to make sure strategies introduced to improve provision and lift pupils' achievement are successful – good.

External support

The local authority continues to take a dynamic part in aiding the school's recovery. Local authority advisers visit the school frequently to monitor, guide and support staff. Through the clear raising attainment plans, they have kept the school focused on the essential elements that are needed to raise standards. They have also helped the staff to increase their skills, knowledge and confidence and ensured that there was good continuity and progression during recent leadership changes. Good progress is being made to move the school towards a position where it can eventually maintain the improvement programmes on a more independent basis.

Priorities for further improvement

- Improve the quality of teaching in Year 3.
- Improve the curriculum planning to ensure activities cater precisely for the needs and interests of all groups of pupils.