

Tribal Group
1-4 Portland
Square
Bristol
BS2 8RR

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



30 March 2010

Miss S Brown
John Rankin Junior School
Henshaw Crescent
Newbury
Berkshire
RG14 6ES

Dear Miss Brown

Special measures: monitoring inspection of John Rankin Junior School

Following my visit with John Earish, Additional Inspector, to your school on 16 and 17 March, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the third monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures in December 2008. The monitoring inspection report is attached and the main judgements are set out below.

Progress since being subject to special measures – good.

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – satisfactory.

Only one Newly Qualified Teacher may be appointed.

This letter and monitoring inspection report will be posted on the Ofsted website.

I am copying this letter and the monitoring inspection report to the Secretary of State, the chair of governors and the Director of Children's Services for West Berkshire.

Yours sincerely

Graham Lee
Additional Inspector



Special measures: monitoring of John Rankin Junior School

Report from the third monitoring inspection on 16–17 March 2010

Evidence

Inspectors observed 16 lessons taught by 9 teachers and looked through samples of pupils' work. They examined documentation, including the school's plan for raising achievement and information about pupils' progress. They met with a group of pupils, two 'parent champions', the headteacher, executive headteacher and all other members of the senior leadership team. They also talked to the school improvement partner and representatives of the governing body.

Context

The headteacher and the executive headteacher continue to work in close partnership as part of the federation with the neighbouring infant school. Since the last visit a new deputy headteacher has taken up post, completing the senior leadership team. For a variety of reasons there has been further disruption to the teaching team and currently one class in Year 4 and both classes in Year 3 are shared by two teachers. The Year 3 classes continue to be shared by teachers from the two schools.

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning

Pupils continue to display good attitudes to learning in most lessons and are keen to improve their work and to do their best. Pupils feel that work is becoming more challenging and that they have more opportunities to apply their learning through investigations and problem solving. This was evident, for example, when pupils in Year 3 were planning an investigation to find out what seeds need to grow. Pupils were able to organise themselves well and demonstrated a good understanding of the importance of a 'fair test' in a scientific enquiry. The more able pupils in Year 6 applied themselves diligently to a range of problems, drawing on their understanding of the relationship between decimals, fractions and percentages. These examples are fairly typical of how well pupils cooperate in groups and pairs, often discussing their ideas animatedly with their 'talk partners'. In a few lessons, pupils' progress slows when they are asked to sit for too long without active involvement. Sometimes, the more able pupils, in particular, are not given sufficient opportunities to devise their own problems and solutions, which restricts their progress.

As a result of very good teaching pupils' progress is accelerating rapidly in Year 6; they are attaining at higher levels this year and are set to meet their challenging targets. Throughout the school pupils' progress continues to improve, although some anomalies remain between subjects and classes. For example, it is clear that pupils continue to make better progress in reading than in mathematics and writing.



However, previous underachievement is being remedied and the gaps are closing. The school's tracking systems are being embedded and are not yet based on consistently accurate data to show pupils' improved progress in lessons with absolute reliability. All groups of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities are well supported and their progress has improved markedly as a result. The pattern of improvement in writing is accelerating and it is clear from pupils' books that they are writing for an increasing range of purposes and audiences. Nevertheless, there are some inconsistencies between classes and year groups and there is more to do to achieve complete consistency.

Judgement

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- Rectify the underachievement in pupils' writing by raising teachers' expectations and ensuring that challenging targets are set – satisfactory.

Other relevant pupil outcomes

Pupils continue to behave well in lessons and around the school for the most part. They are polite, friendly and welcoming to visitors. Inspectors spoke to a group of pupils in Year 6 who say that behaviour is much improved over the past year or so. As a result, the school provides a calm and welcoming environment for learning. Pupils say that they feel safe and that there is always an adult they can go to if they have a problem. Although a few younger boys still present challenges from time to time, most are much more settled than was the case on the last visit. Although most pupils evidently enjoy school, their attendance has dipped significantly this year. This is largely because of a few families who do not send their children to school regularly despite the school's best efforts.

Effectiveness of provision

The quality of teaching continues to be very much better than it was at the last inspection and the proportion of good or better teaching has been maintained since the last visit. Teaching is consistently strong in Year 6 and there is some outstanding practice spread throughout the school, although there is a residue of teaching that is less effective. Generally, teachers have very good relationships with their classes and manage them well. They make the purpose of lessons clear to pupils and, where teaching is particularly effective, revisit these constantly to help pupils to check on the progress they are making. In most lessons, teachers engage learners through a good balance of introductory activities, pair and group work and opportunities for pupils to consolidate their learning independently. Consequently, learning develops at a good pace. In the few lessons where it is less effective, teachers talk for too long or do not match work effectively enough to the needs of all their learners, particularly the more able. As a result pupils' progress slows.



Many of the strategies being used to support pupils' learning and to help to them to improve are now much more firmly embedded. As a result, pupils are clear about what they are learning and are able to identify how well they are doing. Teachers are using 'layered' targets with increasing effectiveness to help pupils move on to the next steps in their learning. There were some very good examples of these being used to encourage pupils to challenge themselves with harder work. At the end of lessons, teachers help pupils to assess how well they have done and what gaps remain in their understanding. This consistency in approach is helping to accelerate progress, although some inconsistency in marking remains. Teachers mark pupils' work regularly and conscientiously but the extent to which this helps pupils to improve is variable.

Teachers often link different aspects of the curriculum together effectively to help pupils to see the relevance of their learning. For example, in Year 4, pupils were writing about the alarm systems they had devised in science. This provided a real context to their work as well as developing their understanding of the important features of an explanatory text. The provision for pupils experiencing difficulties with their learning is continuing to improve. The needs of these pupils are identified at an early stage and there are an increasing range of strategies in place to support their learning both in class and in withdrawal groups. The coordinator and teaching assistants make a significant contribution to the progress of these pupils.

Judgement

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- Improve the overall quality of teaching and learning – satisfactory
- Ensure that there is consistency and detail in the way that teachers help pupils to move on to the next steps in their learning – good.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The school's capacity to sustain improvement is much better than it was at the last inspection and has been strengthened again by the appointment of the new deputy headteacher. Leadership at all levels is now of higher quality. The English and mathematics leaders, for example, are very effective and their work is clearly helping to improve teaching and learning and raise achievement in their areas. Similarly, the special educational coordinator has worked closely with teachers and support staff to improve the provision for these pupils. The deputy headteacher has introduced a monitoring and evaluation framework which makes clear the various strategies that are being used to assess pupils' progress.

The two headteachers continue to provide good strategic leadership, supported by an experienced and governing body. The school's ambitious plans for improvement



are evident in its challenging targets and in its clear plan for raising achievement. As the leadership team is fairly newly established, their various talents have not yet been harnessed to maximum effect in securing improvement. The deputy headteacher has done much to improve the systems to track the progress of individuals and groups still further. However, some of the data are based on assessment information which may not be entirely reliable. Consequently, there is still work to do to ensure that the school has reliable information that will allow it to track progress with complete accuracy and to hold teachers to account for the progress of their pupils.

School leaders and governors continue to work closely with the 'parent champions' who provide an important link between home and school. They have recently conducted a survey which indicates that a number of parents have concerns, in particular about behaviour and the way they are informed about the children's progress. Leaders have done a great deal to communicate the school's policies and practices, for example in relation to behaviour, assessment and homework, and take on board views communicated through the informal parents' meetings. These illustrate the commitment of the school's leaders to engaging fully with all groups of parents, although they recognise that more needs to be done to secure the full confidence of all parents.

Judgement

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- Strengthen the senior leadership team of the school – satisfactory.

External support

The local authority continues to provide good support to the school, principally through its school improvement partner and consultants. They have rightly recognised that support needs to be scaled back as the school builds its own capacity to sustain the improvements that have been made. The school improvement partner continues to provide a good balance of support and challenge to school leaders. The impact of the consultants in literacy and numeracy is evident in the improvements to provision in these areas.