

Tribal Group  
1-4 Portland Square  
Bristol T 08456 40 40 40  
BS2 8RR enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk  
T 0845 1236001 [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)



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Mrs Billie-Ann Ohene  
Berrymede Infant School  
Castle Close  
Park Road North  
Acton  
London  
W3 8RN

Dear Mrs Ohene

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 10 November 2009, for the time you gave to our discussions and for the information which you provided before and during my visit. Please thank the pupils, staff and the chair of governors who gave their time to the discussions.

Since the last inspection, there have been minimal changes to staffing. However, nearly half of the governors are new. The area surrounding the school continues to be regenerated, resulting in high levels of pupil mobility while families are temporarily re-housed elsewhere.

As a result of the inspection on 14–15 October 2008, the school was asked to:

- sharpen the skills of leaders and managers at all levels in using information from monitoring and data analysis to prioritise the most appropriate action to bring about swift improvements
- ensure that teachers make better use of the information gained from tracking progress, assessing and marking to ensure that pupils know their targets and how to improve their work, and that pupils are set consistent and challenging tasks
- improve its partnership with parents and outside agencies and make a determined and uncompromising effort to improve attendance.

Having considered all the evidence, I am of the opinion that at this time the school has made good progress in making improvements and good progress in demonstrating a better capacity for sustained improvement.

There have been good improvements in the most recent standardised tests for Year 2. Standards in writing and mathematics have improved from significantly below the national average to broadly in line with the national average. Given that attainment on entry to the school is below nationally expected levels, this indicates good achievement. This is as a direct result of improved staff knowledge and increased confidence in teaching key skills. For example, there have been improvements in the accuracy and consistency of teaching letters and sounds. There is also greater teacher confidence in supporting pupils to develop their extended writing skills. This is a result of joint training events with the neighbouring junior school and the adoption of an assessment scheme to promote these specific skills. The success of these initiatives is reflected well in the improved writing test results. Following training from a local authority consultant, teaching staff now plan for a more practical approach to mathematics. This enables pupils to have a better understanding of what they are learning about and how their knowledge can be used in everyday life. This is clearly reflected in the very good improvement in the end-of-Year 2 tests. The upward trend in reading standards has resulted from the success of the popular parenting classes, which have helped parents learn how to support their children in the development of their reading skills. The rigorous tracking systems that highlight pupils who are not achieving as well as they could, and the improved level of confidence in teaching communication, language and literacy development in the Reception and Nursery classes, are having a positive influence on reading standards.

At the time of the last inspection, several members of the leadership team were new to the role. However, good-quality training has enabled them to develop as leaders and they are now more confident about driving through improvements. Systematic gathering of information about pupil progress has enabled the senior leaders to identify more clearly which individuals need additional support. Involvement in programmes such as the Black Children Achievement Programme (BCAP) has narrowed the gap between their attainment and that of other groups of pupils. There is now greater use of the data collected to identify those pupils who have special educational needs and those for whom English is an additional language. This enables teachers to implement relevant intervention strategies and link with outside agencies to support these pupils.

Teaching was observed in all but one class and the quality seen was never less than satisfactory. The best lessons included a lively approach and good use of a range of learning styles. A lesson on using speech bubbles included a helpful visual reminder of which way round to write speech marks. Working with peer partners and actively participating in the speech bubble activity also engaged them in their learning. Most pupils are motivated and enthusiastic about their learning. They are keen to do their best and apply themselves well to the tasks set for them. However, pupils are less involved in their learning when they were required to sit for long sessions listening to their teacher.

At the start of each lesson, learning objectives are clearly displayed and discussed. In the best lessons, teachers highlight criteria against which the pupils can evaluate the success of their learning. However, at times, too much focus is placed on completing a specific task rather than on understanding what they are learning from the lesson. Pupils are set appropriate targets for English and mathematics and these are regularly reviewed and checked by senior staff. Most pupils know what they need to do to move on to the next stage of their learning. Nevertheless, a recent scrutiny of marking in books by senior staff acknowledged that not all teachers help their pupils identify what they need to do next to improve their work.

Pupils' behaviour is positive and their friendly and welcoming approach makes a strong contribution to their life in school. The recent appointment of a parent support adviser is having a positive impact on improving attendance rates. Supporting the parents of children who are poor attenders and making contact with welfare officers are raising the profile of the importance of coming to school regularly. Organising nurture groups for parents and helping to run the extended provision ensures that the most vulnerable families can maintain close links with the school.

I hope that you have found the visit helpful in promoting improvement in your school. This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Lorna Brackstone  
Her Majesty's Inspector