

Tribal Group
1-4 Portland
Square
Bristol
BS2 8RR

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

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Mrs M Twydell
Orchard Fields Community School
Prescott Close
Banbury
Oxfordshire
OX16 0RD

Dear Mrs Twydell

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools

Thank you for the help you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 20 October 2009, and for the information you provided before and during my visit. Please extend my thanks to the pupils who spoke to me and the Chair of the Governing Body.

As a result of the inspection on 9–10 September 2008, the school was asked to:

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- accelerate pupils' progress and raise standards, particularly those of boys in reading, writing and mathematics
- ensure that teaching is always closely matched to all pupils' needs and that expectations of the more-able pupils are consistently high enough
- work closely with parents to improve attendance
- carefully analyse the influence of provision, particularly teaching, on pupils' progress and ensure that effective action is taken for improvement.

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

In 2008, the standards pupils attained by the end of Year 6 were significantly below average in English and average in mathematics and science. In 2009, standards remain significantly below national averages at the end of Year 2 and Year 6. There have, however, been improvements at the higher levels in reading and writing in Years 1 and 2 and in English in Years 3 to 6. Attainment in science in Years 3 to 6 has improved.

Children enter the Early Years Foundation Stage with levels of skills and knowledge that are exceptionally lower than those expected for their age, particularly in communication, language and literacy and this, combined with a high number of



pupils who do not regularly attend school due to a variety of reasons, for example, family holidays or medical causes, contributes to the low standards.

Children get a positive start to their schooling in the Early Years Foundation Stage and make satisfactory progress. However, because of their very low levels of skills when starting school, few achieve all the early learning goals by the end of their Reception Year and their language and literacy skills continue to be very weak as they join Year 1. Pupils make satisfactory progress in Years 1 to 6 so that by the end of Year 6, pupils enter the next phase in their education having attained well below the national averages in reading, writing and mathematics.

Currently, the rate of pupils' progress is increasing because of improvements to teaching, and to behaviour. Progress is beginning to accelerate because of changes to staffing in the summer term. The school now uses the core of experienced senior staff to provide effective support to colleagues in each year group enabling them improve their practice. Additionally, the effective preventative support work with the most vulnerable pupils who have social, emotional, learning or behavioural difficulties ensures that pupils' behaviour and attitudes to learning are much improved. To this end the 'Nurture Project' has been particularly beneficial. Teaching assistants provide very good support in class and by teaching specific groups of pupils, and this is helping to accelerate progress. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 do particularly well, but in some other year groups make slower progress. This is due mainly to less-effective teaching. The school has undertaken a thorough analysis of the gaps in pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding so teachers plan their teaching accurately to plug the gaps in pupils' learning. However, this practice is not consistent.

Although the quality of teaching observed was satisfactory, there is a significant pocket of much that is good. The practical and interactive teaching approach supports the good pace of learning in the good lessons. Pupils' behaviour and enjoyment of lessons are good. This is because teachers have positive relationships with their pupils and have high expectations of behaviour. Talk partners are used to enhance pupils' speaking and listening skills effectively. Examples of this were observed in a Year 2 and a Year 6 lesson, where younger pupils discussed making healthy drinks and older pupils discussed ideas for writing poems using similes and alliteration. The new building is spacious and inviting. Some teachers ensure that classrooms are calm and industrious places to work. These have a language-rich environment, are well organised and have high-quality work on display. However, this is not consistent across the school. In the less-effective teaching, there is a lack of clear learning outcomes and pupils do the minimum amount of work because teachers' expectations are not high enough. Pupils do not make enough progress where teaching is unimaginative and does not cater fully for their needs. Additionally, given the weak literacy skills pupils join the school with, not enough is done in these lessons to ensure that these essential skills are accelerated. There are some examples of good marking with clear targets for improvement but this practice is not widespread across the school.



Since the last inspection, rigorous procedures have been implemented for assessing pupils and tracking their progress. These are used to inform decisions regarding intervention groups and to address underachievement in specific areas. The school now sets targets for individual pupils in English and mathematics. Most pupils know what their targets are and what they need to do to improve. The development of these clear systems for monitoring pupils' progress, together with well-focused support to meet the needs of all pupils, is beginning to have a positive effect on pupils' progress. However, the use of this information is not systematically embedded in all class teachers' planning of lessons and activities.

Systems to improve attendance are robust. The school works effectively with external agencies in attempting to improve the level of attendance. Pupils understand the importance of attendance and the school's rewards and sanctions systems. This has meant the number of pupils with 100% attendance has increased. However, attendance remains below average as was the case at the time of the last inspection. This is because the school is experiencing difficulty in shifting the attitudes of some parents and carers whose children are persistently absent.

Procedures to ensure the safety of pupils meet government guidelines. There are, for example, effective procedures for ensuring the safeguarding of pupils through the checks made on all adults who work in the school at the time of this inspection.

Senior leaders have worked successfully to establish an ethos and environment in which pupils feel cared for and safe. They work hard to ensure that the change needed in the school is firmly rooted in accelerating pupils' learning. The challenge for the school now is to ensure that the increased rate of improvement seen on this visit is maintained and that the promising elements of practice are embedded consistently across 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

Kekshan Salaria
Her Majesty's Inspector

