

Tribal Education
1-4 Portland
Square
Bristol
BS2 8RR

T 0300 123 1231
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk



5 May 2010

Ms Cahillane
The Executive Headteacher
New Monument School
Alpha Road
Maybury
Woking
Surrey
GU22 8HA

Dear Ms Cahillane

Ofsted monitoring of schools with a notice to improve

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 28 April 2010 and for the information which you provided during my visit. Please pass on my thanks to staff and pupils, and to the chair of the governing body and the School Improvement Partner for attending the feedback meeting.

Since the inspection some staff changes have resulted in classes in Year 2 and Year 4 being taught by several temporary teachers. An executive headteacher continues to lead the school under the agreement of the soft federation with a local primary school where she is the headteacher. Consultations on changing this arrangement to a hard federation will finish this week. The school's pupil admission number has been reduced to 30 to provide one form of entry.

As a result of the inspection on 9 July 2009, the school was asked to: raise standards and accelerate progress in English and mathematics by consistently engaging and challenging pupils in their learning; provide pupils with greater guidance about their learning and the next steps they need to take in order to progress; and, work more effectively with parents to reduce the number of persistent absentees. Having considered all the evidence, I am of the opinion that at this time the school is making satisfactory progress in addressing the issues for improvement and in raising the pupils' achievement.

The results of national tests in the summer of 2009 showed that, despite low attainment, Year 6 pupils made satisfactory progress during their time in Key Stage 2. The school's own current information shows an increasing number of pupils reach the levels expected for their age, especially in Year 4. Attainment is still below expectations in Years 5 and 6 where past underachievement leaves pupils with much to catch up. In all classes, attainment in reading is better than in writing; it is



strongest in mathematics. Systems for tracking pupils' progress are developing well. Thorough analysis ensures that staff identify quickly any pupils who are falling behind. The school operates numerous intervention programmes to help pupils catch up lost ground. Data show the majority of pupils make satisfactory progress and some make good progress. The positive impact of teaching a daily programme of systematic phonics to younger pupils can be seen in better progress and rising attainment in reading, and in their confidence in using strategies to work out unfamiliar words. The impact is not yet as positive on pupils' writing skills.

Brief visits to a number of lessons confirmed the headteacher's accurate analysis of the strengths and weaknesses in teaching. Classrooms provide a positive environment for learning with displays such as word walls which emphasise and support the development of pupils' vocabulary and their understanding of the structure of English. Good examples were observed of staff asking open-ended questions to engage pupils in discussion and to develop their speaking and listening skills. 'Talking partners' is a strategy used frequently, consistently and successfully as a means of helping pupils engage in learning. Clear step-by-step modelling of strategies for solving mathematical problems enabled pupils to work through different approaches. However, pupils' learning was constrained when activities lacked challenge or when the teacher dominated the discussion.

The quality of teachers' marking and feedback remains too variable, leaving some pupils uncertain about the next steps forward. At its best, in Year 6, there is a clear focus on learning, pupils know what they need to improve and are involved in identifying what they need to work on next; marking is informative and constructive. At times, marking is cursory and, at its worst, pupils' work is unmarked; this is unacceptable. Staff do not always provide a model of good practice in lessons and in their marking to encourage better presentation and handwriting from pupils.

A number of strategies have been successful in securing a significant reduction in the number of pupils who are persistently absent, from 70 at the start of the academic year to five at present. The school has taken a tough stance on authorising absence and, through the work of the school's link worker, has raised parents' awareness of the need for better attendance. Nonetheless, the overall attendance rate for the current year is still too low at 92.4%.

Senior leaders monitor regularly the quality of teaching against an agreed set of criteria. Staff receive feedback and are set targets for improvement. Common issues in teaching are tackled through whole-staff training and individual issues through coaching and support. Termly meetings to discuss the progress of each pupil hold staff accountable for pupils' progress. Senior leaders would benefit from conducting monitoring 'on the hoof' to identify inconsistencies in the quality of teachers' marking. Phase leaders are growing into their leadership role by contributing increasingly to the process of monitoring and evaluating the work of their colleagues.

The local authority's statement of action did not meet the technical requirement to explain why the local authority chose not to use its intervention powers to appoint additional governors or replace the governing body with an interim executive board. This has been rectified. The plan contains a range of appropriate actions to support the school, particularly in improving teaching and learning and to develop the skills of phase leaders. The positive impact can be seen in the better focus on learning and the increased confidence of leaders to carry out their roles. The local authority has provided substantial funding to support the soft federation, providing New Monument with stable leadership and enabling the two schools to share expertise. The local authority adopts a rigorous approach to checking, with governors, that the school is making progress in tackling its weaknesses.

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

Jane Wotherspoon
Her Majesty's Inspector