

Tribal
1-4 Portland
Square
BRISTOL
BS2 8RR

T 0300 123 4234
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk

Direct T 0300 123 4234
Ofstedhelpline@ofsted.gov.uk

11 June 2010

Mrs N Maharasingam
The Headteacher
Rathfern Primary School
Rathfern Road
Catford
London
SE6 4NL

Dear Mrs Maharasingam

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 27 May 2010, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during my visit.

There has been a high turnover of staff since the last inspection. This is partly attributable to robust procedures to deal with underperformance, and partly to unforeseeable personal circumstances relating to a number of individual staff. A new deputy headteacher, with significant expertise in strategies to improve literacy, has been very recently appointed. The number of pupils either leaving or starting at other than the beginning of the school year continues to be much higher than is typically found.

As a result of the inspection on 5 and 6 June 2008, the school was asked to:

- raise standards and achievement in English, mathematics and science for all pupils by ensuring consistently high expectations of what they can do
- ensure pupils know what they need to do to improve by setting learning targets that clearly indicate the next steps in learning
- raise standards and improve pupils' achievement in writing, particularly spelling, punctuation and grammar.

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.



Standards are slowly beginning to rise. Validated data for the 2009 Key Stage 2 test results show that attainment remains below average. Attainment in English improved significantly, whilst in mathematics and science it declined. Because these pupils' attainment at Key Stage 1 had been exceptionally low, this represented good progress in English, and satisfactory progress in mathematics and science. The pupils currently completing Key Stage 2 attained below, but broadly average results at the end of Key Stage 1. The school was able to provide convincing evidence that these pupils are on track to meet their targets. If they do so this will represent good progress.

The headteacher has high expectations which other senior and middle leaders clearly share. These expectations are most obviously evidenced by the consistently high quality of displays which help to create a very attractive learning environment. Parents have started to pick up on these higher expectations and are now far more involved in the life of the school. Results from surveys conducted by the school indicate an increasingly strong level of parental support. The headteacher has improved teaching by dealing robustly with any underperformance and by offering good support, which includes the judicious use of external partners. As a result, the school has made good progress in raising expectations of what pupils can achieve.

The headteacher has taken the lead role for improving assessment, and progress in this area is good. There is a more rigorous system of half-termly tracking which provides teachers with useful information. Teachers are using this to plan more effective lessons, but could make even greater use of the information on progress to plan for differentiation more precisely. Pupils now know the levels they are working at and most can identify the next steps to improve their learning. This much improved monitoring has enabled the school to identify that progress in writing remains a key area for improvement. Pupils do not make enough progress in Years 4 and 5 in writing, although they do better in Year 6. There are appropriate plans to bring about improvement, and progress in improving writing is satisfactory.

Evidence from this inspection tends to support the school's view that more than half of teaching is at least good. This is as a result of higher expectations and a better use of assessment information. The headteacher is an astute judge of the quality of teaching. She is able to identify accurately strengths and weaknesses. Pace still remains an issue, even in the better lessons. Pupils responded extremely well to the crisp, confident teaching exemplified by a Year 6 literacy lesson. When teaching is not of this quality pupils' attention tends to drift and their behaviour can deteriorate. This was most apparent in a Key Stage 1 lesson.

The school has made good progress on two of the key issues and accurately judges that there is more to do to improve writing. It has therefore demonstrated good progress in improving capacity. It is still receiving good quality support from London Challenge. It will be important that as the new staff, and in particular the deputy headteacher, grow into their roles the school reduces its reliance on this support. This will be crucial to demonstrating securely good capacity by the time of the next inspection.

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

Michael Lynes
Her Majesty's Inspector

