

Tribal Education  
1-4 Portland Square  
Bristol  
BS2 8RR

T 0300 123 1231  
Text Phone: 0161 6188524  
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk  
[www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

Direct T 0845 123 6001  
Direct F 0845 123 6002  
email: Fiona.allan1@tribalgroup.com



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Mr Paul Mathews  
The Headteacher  
Norbury Manor Primary School  
Abingdon Road  
Norbury  
London  
SW16 5QR

Dear Mr Mathews

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 8 July 2010 and for the information which you provided during my visit. Please extend my thanks to the pupils and staff who met with me, including the school council, the vice chair of the governing body and the local authority link adviser.

Since the last inspection the school has faced issues in staffing. Five teachers have resigned and the deputy headteacher is also leaving at the end of the summer term. An external adviser for the Early Years Foundation Stage has supported teachers in Nursery and Reception and the school has now appointed a full time Early Years Foundation Stage leader to start in September. The senior leadership team is currently being restructured and the post of Key Stage 1 coordinator is vacant.

As a result of the inspection on 3 and 4 December 2009, the school was asked to:

- improve pupils' learning and academic progress and thereby raise standards, particularly in Key Stage 1, by:
  - improving the quality of teaching to match the best practice
  - ensuring teachers use assessment information to plan lessons that meet the learning needs of all pupils, particularly the more able
  - ensuring teachers provide clear feedback so that all pupils understand how well they are doing and how to improve.
  
- Improve the overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage by:
  - ensuring that information about children's needs is regularly gathered and analysed in order to plan purposeful activities appropriate for all children's needs
  - improving the consistency and quality of teaching and the curriculum in Reception.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time the school is making inadequate progress in addressing the issues for improvement and in raising pupils' achievement.

Weaknesses in teaching identified at the last inspection have adversely affected the progress and overall attainment of pupils in Key Stage 1 this year. Senior leaders have done their best to support weaker practice, but this has not been enough to remedy the inadequate progress of pupils in Key Stage 1. Scrutiny of pupils' work in lessons shows that the large majority of pupils have not made expected progress and attainment remains low. Most pupils in Year 1 and Year 2 have gaps in their knowledge both in literacy and numeracy. More able pupils do not always receive sufficient challenge in lessons to accelerate their progress. These missed opportunities are a result of weaknesses in planning which do not take account of assessment data to match suitable learning for the range of abilities in classes. Pace in lessons is too slow and too many lessons in Key Stage 1 and a few in Key Stage 2 are overly teacher directed. Pupils disengage with learning because they have to listen for too long or they complete work and have no extension task.

Pupils are not given tasks to help them to develop their writing skills for longer pieces of work or develop their mathematical skills through demanding calculations that require them to spend longer problem solving. Occasionally pupils become disinterested and cause low level disruption. Teachers quickly deal with this but learning time is lost. Pupils do not know their targets and lack an understanding of how to improve their work. The school's data for end of Key Stage 1 this year show that attainment in reading, writing and mathematics is broadly in line with the school's results for 2009. Attainment remains low.

Teaching in Key Stage 2 is at least satisfactory. Teachers' planning increasingly sets tasks for different levels of ability and successfully meets the needs of those pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Good use of questioning and group discussion was seen during the inspection. The pace of learning is more demanding than seen at Key Stage 1 and pupils are stretched in their thinking, helping most pupils make at least satisfactory progress. Data show that some pupils in Year 3 and Year 5 are making good progress. Attainment in Year 6 this year is set to fall in mathematics, while the proportion of pupils set to achieve Level 5 or above in English is set to rise.

The quality of target setting, marking and feedback to pupils both oral and written is inconsistent throughout the school. Some good marking provides clear commentary for pupils. Pupils confirm that they know exactly what they need to improve and how, and there is regular discussion with pupils about their work. This is not evident in all classes. The sparseness of some marking and lack of clear targets is inhibiting pupil progress.

The school works hard with families of pupils who do not attend regularly but, despite a reduction in persistent absence, attendance remains low. There is variability in attendance levels among different year groups.

The overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage is steadily improving. The introduction of the Early Years Foundation Stage eprofile tracking system and a more systematic approach to assessing, recording and planning for each child's

needs is helping to ensure that assessment information is accurate and that progress of children can now be carefully monitored. Children now make at least satisfactory progress from starting points which are for many children below those typical of three-year-olds. Attainment is rising and the outcomes for children this year are the highest scores for the school in three years.

External support for teaching staff has helped them to become increasingly familiar with using different ways of recording observations on a daily basis. This is starting to be used more comprehensively to capture the learning and development of children in each of the areas of learning. The remodelling of indoor teaching spaces and investment in resources has given scope for more adult-led group activities and child-initiated learning. Questioning is used increasingly well to develop children's speaking and listening skills and for encouraging them to reply in full sentences. Some effective use of teaching assistants develops children's literacy skills, especially for those who are at the early stages of learning English.

The quality of teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage is variable. Greater consistency of good teaching is needed if the school is to sustain the improvements made in the last seven months. The same is true for embedding systematic formative assessment so that staff diligently use new systems that have been put in place to plan learning matched to children's needs.

The local authority's statement of action meets requirements. Success criteria and milestones for the school are sharply focused on the areas for improvement. High levels of human and financial resource investment by the local authority have helped the headteacher and senior leaders tackle some areas of under performance and make changes which are beginning to bear fruit. Senior leaders have been highly receptive to support from a range of consultants, advisers from the local authority and the school has benefited from being part of the London Challenge Keys to Success programme.

Senior leaders have worked tirelessly and willingly engaged in challenging dialogue to address problems and try to move the school forward. Even so, the pace of change has been too slow. The impact of actions taken to secure consistently good practice throughout the school has yet to lead to better outcomes for all pupils in raising achievement, especially at Key Stage 1.

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

Joanna Beckford-Hall  
Her Majesty's Inspector