

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

Direct T 0845 1236001
Direct F 0845 1236002
email:sarah.cartlidge@tribalgroup.com

15 July 2010

Mrs Kathleen Nugent
The Headteacher
The Pines Primary School
Hanworth Road
Hanworth
Bracknell
Berkshire
RG12 7WX

Dear Mrs Nugent

Special measures: monitoring inspection of The Pines Primary School

Following my visit with Gail Robertson, additional inspector, to your school on 7 and 8 July 2010, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures in February 2010. The monitoring inspection report is attached and the main judgements are set out below.

Progress since being subject to special measures – satisfactory.

Newly qualified teachers may not be appointed.

This letter and monitoring inspection report will be posted on the Ofsted website.

I am copying this letter and the monitoring inspection report to the Secretary of State, the chair of the governing body and the Director for Children, Young People and Learning for Bracknell Forest.

Yours sincerely

Linda McGill
Her Majesty's Inspector

Special measures: monitoring of The Pines Primary School

Report from the first monitoring inspection on 7 and 8 July 2010

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher and deputy headteachers, the consultant leader and consultant for special educational needs, the chair of the governing body, the School Improvement Partner and the local authority's principal adviser. Inspectors spoke informally to pupils during lessons and at break times.

Context

There have been no significant changes to the school's context since the inspection in February 2010. Three teachers are to leave the school at the end of this term.

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning

The headteacher and staff are rightly pleased with the provisional results of the national tests for pupils at the end of Key Stage 2. All pupils except one reached the expected Level 4 in English, which is a substantial increase on last year. The proportion reaching the higher level also improved. In mathematics, four fifths of pupils reached the expected level, although the proportion reaching the higher level remained the same as last year. Every pupil made two levels of progress across Key Stage 2 in English and four fifths did so in mathematics. The school attributes these improvements to the efforts made to boost these pupils' attainment, in particular the one-to-one tuition that some received, and to stronger teaching in Year 6.

There were also improvements at the end of Key Stage 1. The teacher's assessments show that pupils attained more highly in reading and writing than last year. However, no pupil attained a higher Level 3 in writing and attainment in mathematics declined. The school's data for other year groups indicate that there is still some underachievement and that not all pupils have made progress at the expected rate. Data about pupils' attainment and progress are collected regularly and systematically and the school is much better placed to spot those who may be falling behind. However, there is doubt about the accuracy of assessments in some year groups and so the correct picture has yet to be confirmed.

While the headline figures are encouraging, looking at the results more closely shows that there are still areas of weakness that need to be tackled. For example, the proportion of boys who reached the higher level in writing at the age of eleven is half that of the girls. The gap between boys' and girls' performance in writing at the age of seven is also marked. There are only seven boys in the class, but three of them did not succeed in reaching the level expected for their age in writing. In

addition, the proportion of Year 6 pupils attaining the higher level in mathematics is likely to remain significantly below the national figure.

Steps have been taken to kindle boys' enthusiasm for writing. The recent Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) week was successful on a number of fronts, and the work based around Dr Who in Year 6 resulted in some good examples of lively, engaging writing. However, these sorts of events are not embedded in the curriculum. Scrutiny of pupils' workbooks shows that the opportunities for writing at length and in a range of styles are relatively few and the daily diet of writing activities is not inspiring. Work in other subjects, such as religious education and science, often consists of the completion of worksheets which do not reinforce the development of literacy skills. Pupils' progress in writing is carefully tracked and the information shows that in some year groups both girls and boys are not making sufficient progress. There is, as yet, no clear indication that the gap between boys' and girls' performance in writing is beginning to close. Staff intend to analyse examples of boys' writing more closely in order to pinpoint exactly the reasons why boys do not do as well as girls. This would be a useful step and would enable efforts to remedy the situation to be more precisely targeted.

Pupils are willing learners. They usually listen well to their teachers and each other, and get on readily with their work. Many are confident to ask and answer questions and to express their ideas.

Progress since the last inspection on the area for improvement:

- improve standards of boys' writing and basic skills by providing meaningful writing opportunities in all subjects – inadequate.

Other relevant pupil outcomes

Other outcomes for pupils were not a particular focus for this inspection. During the visit, pupils behaved well both in lessons and at lunch and break times, cooperating well and playing safely with one another.

The effectiveness of provision

The staff are keen to improve their practice. The teachers have visited another school to observe good teaching and are increasingly working in partnership with others. This is resulting in growing confidence and some improvements to teaching, although this term's target for the proportion of good or better teaching has not been reached. Teachers welcome the insights that the more frequent discussions about pupils' performance give them, and in consequence are better placed to make sure that tasks in lessons more closely match pupils' needs. Whole-school approaches are becoming embedded; for example, teachers routinely discuss the lesson's objectives with the class. However, not all are secure in distinguishing between objectives for learning and the tasks that pupils will complete. This has an

impact on how well pupils are able to reflect on what they have learned, rather than stating what they have done, at the end of the lesson. In lessons, there are still occasions when the pace is leisurely. There are also instances of insufficient challenge for higher attaining pupils and a lack of vigilance from teachers in ensuring that no time is wasted. For example, pupils who completed their tasks swiftly and with ease in a mathematics lesson went unnoticed by the teacher. Nothing had been planned for them to move on to when finished.

Teachers mark pupils' work regularly and give feedback on how well they have done and where they might do better. The recently agreed policy for marking gives teachers good guidance on the aims and principles of marking, but it does not set out clearly what good marking should look like at The Pines. More detail is needed on how work should be annotated, for example, so that pupils know what to expect in every year group.

Progress since the last inspection on the area for improvement:

- improve teaching and pupils' progress by: adopting strategies that engage pupils so that they take greater responsibility for their learning; making better use of time in lessons to increase the pace of learning; having higher expectations of pupils and ensuring that more-able pupils are consistently challenged in lessons; improving the quality of marking and increasing pupils' involvement in evaluating their own progress – satisfactory.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

With the support of the local authority, senior leaders are establishing the necessary systems and procedures to ensure greater accountability and to enable accurate self-evaluation. The chair of the governing body, senior leaders and others all expressed their commitment and determination to bring about improvements. They have embraced willingly the support and guidance that they have been offered. There is a clear understanding that enhancing the quality of teaching will be a major factor in bringing about improvements in pupils' achievement, which is why efforts are being made to support teachers in developing their practice. Some tough messages have been given. However, the approach to improvement is wide ranging. Currently, professional development opportunities are largely available to all, and are not fine-tuned to meet the needs of individuals or smaller groups of staff. The outcomes of various monitoring activities are not being used to highlight areas of weakness or strength and then to determine what should be done next.

For a small school, the leadership structure is top heavy. This does not lead to an appropriate distribution of leadership roles across the staff group. It also inhibits the opportunities for others to take on responsibility.

Members of the governing body have undertaken training in order to improve their knowledge of how to hold the school to account. They have also established an additional committee to oversee more closely pupils' progress and attainment.

Progress since the last inspection on the area for improvement:

- increase the capacity for sustained improvement by: introducing a cycle of self-evaluation involving all, including parents; focusing planning on specific actions and measurable targets to eliminate inadequate teaching and raise pupils' achievement; checking the progress pupils make towards challenging targets more regularly so that action can be taken rapidly to eliminate potential underachievement; identifying where teachers' expertise needs improving and providing tailored professional development – satisfactory.

External support

The local authority's statement of action was amended in line with feedback from the evaluation and is fit for purpose. However, the improvement in outcomes at the end of Year 6 means that the targets for next year now look insufficiently challenging and may need revising.

The local authority is providing a good deal of effective, well-targeted support. The work of the consultants and leading literacy teacher is having a positive impact on the rate of improvement. The appointment of an additional governor has strengthened the governing body.

The management intervention board makes frequent checks on the school's progress in addressing areas of weakness. Its reviews highlight clearly where there has been success and where more remains to be done.

Priorities for further improvement

- Undertake a scrutiny of boys' work in writing to identify clearly what boys need to be able to do to close the gap on the girls, and take steps to help them make faster progress.
- Use the outcomes of monitoring and checks on teaching to identify the most important areas to work on next, and provide support that is more closely matched to individual teachers' needs.