

Tribal Group
1-4 Portland
Square
Bristol
BS2 8RR
T 0845 123 6001
F 0845 123 6002

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



3 June 2008

Mrs P Turner
The Headteacher
St Mary's Catholic Primary School
Woodside Way
Northampton
Northamptonshire NN5 7HX

Dear Mrs Turner

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 20 May 2008, for the time you gave to our phone discussions, and for the information which you provided before and during my visit. Would you please pass my thanks on to the pupils and staff for taking the time to talk to me?

This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website. Please inform the Regional Inspection Service Provider of any factual inaccuracies within 24 hours of the receipt of this letter.

As a result of the inspection on 5 and 6 December 2007, the school was asked to:

- ensure teachers' mathematical subject knowledge is secure and that the mathematics curriculum provides a well planned succession of activities so pupils achieve well
- improve teaching by providing activities that successfully build on what pupils already know and challenge their knowledge and understanding
- provide management training and support for coordinators so they are able to evaluate the provision in their subjects and understand how they can be improved
- work with parents to improve pupils' attendance.

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.

You, as the subject leader for mathematics, have carried out a thorough audit of teachers' subject knowledge and implemented a programme of targeted support. For example, all teachers have benefited from training about meeting the needs of more able pupils and the use of questioning in mathematics lessons. Along with your deputy, you have taught demonstration lessons for some teachers and others have had opportunities to visit different schools. As a result, the quality of teaching and learning in mathematics is improving and school assessment data indicates that virtually all pupils are now making at least satisfactory progress in mathematics. However, there are still significant gaps in understanding for some pupils. Feedback

from the routine lesson observations by yourself and the local authority provide helpful developmental points for individual teachers to ensure that they are well placed to improve further.

You have rightly focused work to improve the quality of teaching and learning on the use of assessment to plan suitably challenging work for all pupils. The combination of training and evaluation has successfully enabled teachers to develop their skills and to plan their lessons more effectively to build on the pupils' knowledge and understanding. Most lessons are focused on clear learning objectives with activities suitably matched to the needs of the pupils. Teachers and their assistants use questioning well to assess understanding and lessons move on at a reasonable pace. However, teachers' mathematical subject knowledge is still not secure. As a result, gaps in pupils' understanding are not always noticed quickly enough and, occasionally, pupils choose inappropriate strategies or become confused. Work is marked carefully and teachers provide useful guidance to help pupils improve their work.

Subject leaders have benefited from a range of training and they are developing a greater understanding of their roles. For example, most are now contributing to whole school development by preparing action plans as part of the school development plan. Participation in activities, such as scrutiny of pupils' work, to evaluate the impact of their actions on pupils' learning is also used to provide helpful developmental feedback to colleagues. Good practice has been established in carrying out joint lesson observations in English, mathematics and science. However, this work currently only involves you and your deputy.

Appropriate strategies to improve attendance have been implemented. Attendance data has been analysed and action taken to reduce the absence levels for poor attenders. Pupils' attendance is now high profile and parents are fully informed about the school's policy. Praise for good attendance, through the award of certificates, is also a sensible part of the strategy. As a result of these actions, attendance has improved since the last inspection. However, there is still a small minority of pupils whose attendance is not good enough.

The local authority has produced a satisfactory statement of action to support the school. They have provided considerable support and training for all staff, including work with subject leaders to develop their skills. The education welfare officer has worked closely with the school to support the implementation of strategies that are already improving the attendance of pupils. The local authority's review of the school in February 2008 provided the school with an assessment of progress and some helpful areas for further development.

I hope that you have found the visit helpful in promoting improvement in your school.

Yours sincerely

Mark Mumby
Her Majesty's Inspector