

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



11 December 2008

Mrs Marlene Douglas
The Headteacher
Marsh Hill Primary School
Marsh Hill
Erdington
Birmingham
West Midlands B23 7HY

Dear Mrs Douglas

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 10 December 2008, for the time you gave to our phone discussions, and for the information which you provided before and during my visit. Please pass on my thanks to the senior staff for the time spent in discussions and for organising the scrutiny of work.

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.

You were appointed as the new headteacher in September 2008. The local authority carried out an inspection of the school on 11 and 12 September 2008 to judge progress on each area of improvement identified by the previous inspection in April 2008. Overall progress was judged inadequate, but since then improvements have been made in teaching, assessment and leadership, particularly in the Early Years Foundation Stage and in mathematics and science. As a result, standards are rising and pupils' progress is starting to accelerate in each phase.

As a result of the inspection in April 2008, the school was asked to:

- ensure that the Foundation Stage curriculum provides for all areas of learning, has a good balance between adult-led and child-initiated activities, and makes effective use of outdoor space
- make certain that assessment information in the Foundation Stage is accurate and is used effectively to plan activities that move children's learning on
- raise the quality of teaching, ensuring that assessment information is used to plan work that more closely meets the needs of all pupils in mathematics and those of the more able in science in Key Stage 2
- improve attendance and punctuality.

Having considered all the evidence, I am of the opinion that at this time the school is making satisfactory progress overall in addressing the points for improvement. Satisfactory progress has been made in remedying the weaknesses in the Early Years Foundation Stage and improving the quality of teaching in mathematics and science. However, progress towards improving attendance and punctuality has been inadequate.

Standards at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage, Years 2 and 6 are rising and pupils' progress is beginning to accelerate. In July 2008, the school met or exceeded its target to ensure that at least 60% of children at the end of the Reception year were achieving the expected level for their age in communication, language and literacy, personal and social education, and problem solving, reasoning and number. The standards achieved in 2008 were much higher than previous years. Standards are rising because teaching is more effective and the curriculum is better matched to children's needs, abilities and interests. All areas of learning are now planned for and an appropriate balance is struck between adult led and child initiated activities. Learning occurs indoors and outside and effective use is made of the outdoor space. Assessment procedures are much improved. Regular observations and reviews of children's learning are undertaken using set criteria. Staff are making accurate assessments of children's performance and this is confirmed by outside moderators who check the robustness of any attainment judgements made. Assessment information is being used to plan suitable activities so children's learning moves on. Adult led activities are soundly planned and are generally of better quality than child initiated tasks. In the lessons observed teachers taught letters and sounds and number concepts securely and children were motivated and enjoyed the activities. However, some child initiated activities were unproductive and tasks were not always well matched to children's capabilities. For example, the colouring in of nativity worksheets was mundane and some home corner and shop activities were not adequately resourced or properly planned to sustain children's interest or take their learning forward.

In 2008, Year 2 standards rose markedly in English and mathematics from below average to average in English and above average in mathematics. In mathematics, the proportion reaching the expected level rose by 24% and the number reaching the higher Level 3 by 20%. In reading there was a 12% increase in the percentage reaching the expected level and a 20% increase in the number gaining the higher level. In science the proportion reaching the higher level more than doubled, although there was a decline in the number reaching the expected level. The 2008 unvalidated Year 6 results show that standards rose in mathematics, albeit from a low base. The percentage reaching the expected level rose by 14% and there was a 4% increase in the number gaining the higher Level 5. In science there was a 9% increase in the percentage reaching the expected level but a drop in the proportion gaining

the higher level. The school was disappointed with the drop in English standards. Evidence indicates that pupils underperformed in examinations and did not do as well in the writing test as they do in class when the pressure is off. Current data shows that pupils' progress has accelerated since September 2008 in English, mathematics and science in most year groups. The exception is Year 3 and in one Year 4 class where progress in reading, writing and mathematics has been much slower. Year 5 pupils' progress is accelerating and provision is beginning to make amends for pupils' underachievement in Year 4. Year 6 work scrutiny reveals that standards are rising at a good rate in English, mathematics and science, and that most pupils are on track to reach at least average standards in all three subjects. Teaching quality has improved because assessment information is now being used more effectively to ensure lessons are more challenging. This said, some unsatisfactory teaching still exists and not enough teaching is good. Unsatisfactory teaching occurs primarily where expectations are not high enough, tasks are not effectively matched to pupils' capabilities, or where time is not used wisely. Marking of pupils' work is now regular and developmental. The presentation of work in books is good. A number of teachers are markers for Year 6 examinations and their skills have been put to good use, effectively moderating standards in Years 1 to 6. This has ensured that judgements made about attainment are secure.

Attendance and punctuality are inadequate. The level of persistent absence is well above average. Non attendance is slowing pupils' progress and hindering learning. Procedures to ensure pupils attend regularly and arrive on time have not been effective.

Inspectors are required to check that the school's procedures for safeguarding pupils meet government requirements. All of the necessary employment checks are carried out and all staff, including supply teachers who are appropriately vetted to confirm their suitability to work with children. However, the school does not record all of the required information in its single central register.

The statement of action produced by the local authority following the last inspection met requirements. The level of support and guidance provided by the local authority has been satisfactory and in line with that identified in the post inspection action plan. Leaders say they have found the work of the advanced skills teachers to be particularly effective, and have welcomed the opportunity to visit other schools to observe good practice. However, the action taken to improve attendance and punctuality has not been effective.

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

Yours sincerely

David Rzeknik
Her Majesty's Inspector