

Tribal Group  
1-4 Portland  
Square  
Bristol  
BS2 8RR

T 08456 40 40 40  
[enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
[www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

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Mrs P Honeychurch  
The Headteacher  
Cottage Grove Primary School  
Chivers Close  
Southsea  
Hampshire  
PO5 1HG

Dear Mrs Honeychurch

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Cottage Grove Primary School

Following my visit with Stuart Charlton, additional inspector, to your school on 10 March 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 third monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures in November 2008. The monitoring inspection report is attached and the main judgements are set out below.

Progress since being subject to special measures– satisfactory.

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – satisfactory.

Newly qualified teachers may 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 Interim Executive Board (IEB) and the Director of Children's Services for Portsmouth City Council.

Yours sincerely

John Seal  
Her Majesty's Inspector



Special measures: monitoring of Cottage Grove Primary School

Report from the third monitoring inspection on 10 March 2010

## Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with headteacher, members of staff, pupils and representatives of the Interim Executive Board (IEB) and local authority.

## Context

There have been further changes to staffing, the management team and the organisation of some teaching groups since the last visit. The deputy headteacher has been on long-term sick leave since January and his responsibilities have been temporarily distributed amongst the other senior leaders and managers. From February, an inclusion manager was seconded from the local authority on a part-time basis until the end of the summer term to replace the previous post holder who retired at the end of December 2009. A new literacy manager was appointed in January 2010 who is also a teacher for one of the mixed Years 1 and 2 classes. One of the teachers of the mixed Years 5 and 6 teaching team has been appointed as Key Stage 2 manager. Due to changes in the local population, the number of pupils in the Years 3 and 4 has decreased and, as a consequence, the pupils have been re-organised into two classes from the previous three. A part-time teacher for the mixed Years 3 and 4 classes was appointed in January. From February, a shadow governing body was constituted and is now working in parallel to the IEB.

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

The school has an accurate picture of pupils' standards of attainment and their rates of progress throughout the school. In addition to the school's own data, work seen in classes and in pupils' books indicates that the proportion of pupils working at nationally expected standards continues to rise, especially in Years 5 and 6. Progress varies across the school because of inconsistencies in the quality of teaching and learning particularly in Key Stage 1 and Years 3 and 4. However, it is satisfactory overall because of the impact of the various targeted catch-up programmes for those pupils at risk of underachieving. The school has correctly identified that there are a significant minority of pupils whose attainment in writing is not high enough. The school has taken appropriate steps to put in place additional support for these pupils. The school's current information about their learning indicates that progress is beginning to increase. Children's progress and levels of knowledge and understanding in the Early Years Foundation Stage were not looked at during this monitoring visit.

Progress since the last visit on the area for improvement:



- Raise standards and achievement by ensuring that all lessons provide activities that match the needs of pupils of all abilities in each class – satisfactory.

#### Other relevant pupil outcomes

The school ensures that pupils are very well looked after and cared for. No pupils have been excluded since the last visit and vulnerable pupils are carefully and sensitively monitored. Pupils of all ages behave well around the school, playing in a friendly manner and often looking after each other. Behaviour in lessons is equally good and in some cases excellent with particularly good attitudes towards learning. This is most obviously seen in the mixed Year 5 and 6 classes. The school's work to improve attendance is beginning to pay off. There are strong indications that the attendance of many of the pupils, especially in Key Stage 2, is now at least in line with the national average. Persistent non-attenders are known to the school and the effective liaison with other agencies is beginning to have a positive impact on their attendance.

Progress since the last visit on the area for improvement:

- Improve attendance by continuing to emphasise to parents the impact that absence from school has on their child's progress – satisfactory.

#### The effectiveness of provision

Since the inspection, the school has rightly invested heavily in support, training and resources to improve the quality of teaching and learning. The changes of teaching staff in Key Stage 1 and the mixed Years 3 and 4 classes since the beginning of 2009 have diluted the effects of this initiative. Although there is consistently good and better teaching in Years 5 and 6, inconsistencies remain in the rest of the school. Teaching varies from satisfactory with some good in Key Stage 1 and lower Key Stage 2. The key features of the good teaching are pacy, well-planned and organised lessons, where activities are closely matched to pupils' learning needs because of the effective use of assessment information. Teachers use their good subject knowledge to ask challenging questions and frequently encourage pupils to engage in structured discussions with each other about their learning. Pupils know their targets and what they need to do to improve. Consequently, pupils make good progress in lessons and over time. The less effective lessons are generally securely structured and planned and take into consideration most pupils' previous learning. However, teachers often talk for too long during introductions, are not explicit in their explanations, and fail to adjust the activities sufficiently well to meet pupils' specific abilities and needs during the lessons. Consequently, pupils become passive, disinterested and make slower progress than is expected. The very effective assessment systems that are now in place provide accurate information on pupils' progress and attainment. This is well used by the school to compensate for the slower progress in some classes through effective targeting of intervention



programmes and additional support in lessons. Consequently, pupils make at least satisfactory progress over time. Pupils with special educational needs and those at an early stage of learning English have their needs met very well and make good progress.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- Improve curriculum planning for literacy and numeracy in the mixed age classes so that it caters for the full spread of ages and abilities – satisfactory

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The school's action plan for improvement clearly identifies priorities, challenging targets, responsibilities and a suitable timeline. It is well monitored by the leadership team, IEB and local authority. The leadership team is developing well and there are clear indications that they know what the school needs to do to improve and have the skills and capacity to drive the school forward. The headteacher and her team are acutely aware of the issues needing to be tackled. However, they have been hindered in their efforts to improve the overall quality of teaching and learning by the lack of continuous staffing in some year groups. The well-embedded assessment and monitoring systems have enabled the school to maintain a focus on pupils' progress which has resulted in their generally satisfactory progress. However, the proportion of good or better teaching is not high enough across the whole school to sustain an increase in pupils' rates of progress over time. The IEB continues to provide rigorous challenge and a clear view on how the school needs to move forward. The shadow governing body has been constituted and held its first meetings. Safeguarding is secure with all procedures, training and a single central register in place.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- Ensure systems to track and analyse pupils' progress provide information that clearly shows pupils' rates of progress, particularly in the longer term, so that the school can take effective action more promptly – good.
- Ensure that the school's improvement plan contains clear success criteria, so that outcomes can be accurately measured and all leaders held accountable, in order to accelerate the pace of change within the school – good.

External support

The local authority has maintained its close monitoring role through the visits of the School Improvement Partner, and there is no longer a need for any externally directed input or training from the local authority. Any support is brokered effectively by the school as and when it is required.



## Priority for further improvement

- Ensure all teachers consistently use data to inform detailed planning in order to secure good progress for all groups of pupils.

