

Tribal Group
1–4 Portland
Square
Bristol
BS2 8RR

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

9 October 2009

Mrs K Stephenson
Merryhills Primary School
Bincote Road
Enfield
Middlesex
EN2 7RE

Dear Mrs Stephenson

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 28 September 2009, for the time you gave to our phone discussion and for the information which you provided before and during my visit. Please also pass my thanks to the pupils, governors, senior and middle leaders who spoke with me.

Since the previous inspection, four members of staff have left. One teacher is on maternity leave and two have returned from maternity leave. There have also been a number of changes to the governing body, including a new chair. Currently there are four governor vacancies.

As a result of the inspection on 24–25 September 2008, the school was asked to:

- improve the consistency of teaching in Years 1 to 6 by making sure it challenges the more able pupils sufficiently
- ensure that thorough and accurate assessment helps pupils to improve their work
- make monitoring and evaluation of the school's work more rigorous to identify clearly the most important priorities for improvement.

Having considered all the evidence, I am of the opinion that at this time the school has made satisfactory progress in making improvements.

Evidence from lessons observed, an analysis of the school's tracking data and scrutiny of books shows that pupils, including the more able, are making satisfactory progress to reach standards that are broadly average by the time they leave the school. Targets are appropriately challenging and, although the unvalidated results indicate that these have been missed by 3% in 2009, they are increasingly being used to support improvement. For example, there has been a focus on improving mathematics and the proportion of pupils making the expected progress in this subject has risen. However, this improvement has not been mirrored in English,



particularly writing, and some inconsistencies in the quality of teaching and learning remain. Consequently, the impact of the actions taken by the school so far demonstrates that it is building the capacity to sustain improvement satisfactorily.

Staff have had training on the features of a good lesson and a new planning format is being used to secure greater consistency in the quality of teaching and learning. Typically, planning includes a range of tasks that are varied to meet the different needs of pupils in each class and clearly identifies how teaching assistant support is to be used. In the most effective lessons, tasks provide good levels of challenge and effective use is made of links with other subjects so learning is meaningful and relevant. Pupils are given clear, useful guidance about the steps they need to take to secure success in meeting the lesson objective. Teachers skilfully use timely interventions and well-constructed, open questions to challenge pupils' thinking, maintain a brisk pace and secure good learning. The introduction of philosophy in Years 5 and 6 has made a particularly positive contribution to this good teaching and learning by promoting opportunities for pupils to develop their own questioning, reflection and thinking skills. Where lessons are satisfactory rather than good, there are missed opportunities for pupils to develop and explain their ideas and to evaluate their learning. Although tasks are varied, they do not consistently provide sufficient challenge to secure good learning gains for the most able pupils. For example, the pace of learning slows when pupils who have grasped a concept have to wait for others or are not moved on to the next step fast enough.

More accurate assessments have been secured through staff involvement in the Assessing Pupil Progress strategy, the local authority personalisation programme, and joint meetings where judgements are moderated. Pupil progress meetings with senior leaders have been introduced so that teachers are able to discuss the progress their pupils are making. Additional support is then identified to help teachers as well as pupils who need it. This is having a positive impact on securing greater consistency in planning and the quality of marking. Most marking follows the school's policy and includes useful comments on what pupils have done well and how they can improve further. Opportunities for pupils to respond to marking comments are more varied. Pupils know their targets for improvement but are not always involved in setting them.

The leadership team has been strengthened through a wider distribution of key roles, such as the leadership of literacy and numeracy. A regular, systematic programme of monitoring has been put in place and a more detailed tool to track the progress that pupils make has been developed. These are being used increasingly by middle as well as senior leaders to identify the school's strengths and weaknesses accurately. Links between different sources of information, such as lesson observations and pupil progress data, to secure robust evaluations are not yet embedded. Appropriate priorities are identified in the school's development plan, including the areas for improvement identified at the previous inspection. Sharp, quantifiable success criteria and timely milestone measures of progress are not yet



included. Consequently, the plan does not support the governors sufficiently in their role as critical friend to help secure more rapid improvement.

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 faithfully

Jackie Krafft
Her Majesty's Inspector