

Tribal
1-4 Portland Square
BRISTOL
BS2 8RR

T 0300 123 1231
Text Phone: 0161 6188524 **Direct T** 0845 123 6001
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk **Direct F** 0117 315 0430
www.ofsted.gov.uk **Email:** rebecca.jackson@tribalgroup.com



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Mr D McBride
Headteacher
St Michael's Roman Catholic Primary School
Hills Terrace
Chatham
Kent
ME4 6PX

Dear Mr McBride

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools: monitoring inspection of St Michael's Roman Catholic Primary School

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 8 February 2011, for the time you gave to our discussions and for the information which you provided before and during the inspection. Please pass on my thanks to governors for their time and to the Year 6 pupils to whom I spoke.

Following a period of uncertainty, owing to long-term sickness absence amongst members of the senior leadership team, including the former headteacher and deputy headteacher, a new headteacher took up his post in September 2010. Since then, there has been a substantial turnover of staff and a new senior leadership team has been established. A number of teachers are currently on short-term, temporary contracts. In addition, a complete restructuring of the support staff is ongoing.

As a result of the inspection on 19–20 May 2009, the school was asked to address the most important areas for improvement which are set out in the annex to this letter.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time the school has made:

inadequate progress in making improvements

and

satisfactory progress in demonstrating a better capacity for sustained improvement.



Results from national tests in 2010 showed that pupils' attainment in English and mathematics at the end of Years 2 and 6 remained at levels which were significantly below national average. The progress made by pupils from the end of Year 2 to the end of Year 6 was also significantly lower than average. School data for the current academic year indicate that pupils in Year 6 are more likely to achieve the school's targets, but the pattern of progress across the school is still too variable. While there is evidence of accelerated progress being made by some groups, most notably in the Early Years Foundation Stage and in Years 2 and 5, the school still has some way to go if all pupils are to reach their challenging targets in all year groups by the end of the school year.

Since his appointment, the headteacher has demonstrated a relentless focus on putting new systems into place to monitor and evaluate the work of the school, in order to improve the quality of teaching, raise attainment and accelerate pupils' progress. A new leadership team has now been established and middle leaders are contributing very positively to the school's capacity for sustained improvement. They said, 'For us, the new headteacher was like a breath of fresh air.... Until he came everyone was doing their own thing.' Increasingly, curriculum leaders are monitoring and evaluating provision in their areas and implementing improvements to accelerate achievement. In addition, support is being provided by the local authority through advisers and consultants, and an advisory teacher is working alongside Year 6 staff effectively to model good practice.

During the monitoring visit, five lesson observations were undertaken jointly with the headteacher, and these demonstrated that teaching has improved significantly since the last inspection. The strengths and weaknesses of each lesson were agreed, showing that the current leadership is accurate in its judgements and strategies for improving teaching are effective. For example, teachers were demonstrating good practice in making clear what pupils were expected to learn and in assessing their progress. However, in some classes, teaching was not sufficiently adapted to challenge pupils of different levels of ability including pupils who speak English as an additional language. These were key areas for improvement in the last inspection and remain so in some classes. Pupils were sometimes listening to teachers in lessons for too long which slowed the pace and made them restless before they settled down to tasks that reinforced or promoted their learning.

Pupils speak very positively of the school and the new headteacher. In the words of one pupil, 'Now he's come, the school's getting much, much better. He's bringing in new books and making it all nice.' They complained that, as was the case at the last inspection, there are still not enough opportunities to use computers. The school has made inadequate progress in addressing this issue. Although the behaviour of pupils in lessons is exemplary, out of lessons, for example in corridors and at play times, there is evidence of some boisterous behaviour which is not managed well, particularly at lunch times.



There are now clear signs of progress. However, it is only in the last term, under the leadership of the new headteacher, that improvement strategies have begun to have a positive impact.

I hope that you have found the inspection helpful in promoting improvement in your school. This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Angela Konarzewski

Additional Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in May 2009

- Increase the amount of pace and challenge in lessons to involve pupils more actively in their learning and help them make swifter progress.
- Ensure the lesson activities meet the needs of all pupils, particularly those learning English as an additional language, in order to raise achievement and standards.
- Increase the opportunities for pupils to use their information and communication (ICT) skills regularly throughout the curriculum.
- Increase the effectiveness of subject leaders by making sure they have the opportunity to monitor and evaluate the strategies used to raise achievement and standards in their areas.