

Tribal Group
1-4 Portland
Square
Bristol
BS2 8RR

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

Direct T 0117 3115236
Direct F 0117 3150430
Joanna.Beckford.Hall@ofsted.gov.uk



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Mrs Jacky Darling
Newington Church of England Primary School
School Lane
Newington
Sittingbourne
Kent
ME9 7LB

Dear Mrs Darling

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 11 February 2010 and for the information which you provided during my visit. Please pass on my thanks to pupils and staff, the Chair of the Governors and the School Improvement Partner.

Since the last inspection, the school has faced a period of turbulent staffing. A restructuring of staffing has occurred and two newly qualified teachers joined the school this year. There is currently a vacancy for a deputy headteacher.

As a result of the inspection on 13–14 February 2008, the school was asked to:

- develop better methods for recording and tracking pupils' progress to give teachers a clear idea of what each pupil needs to do in order to reach higher standards, particularly in mathematics in Years 5 and 6
- improve teachers' marking so that it shows pupils clearly what their targets are and what they need to do next to improve their work
- raise pupils' awareness of the diversity of beliefs, customs and traditions of the people living in our multicultural society.

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

inadequate progress in making improvements
and
inadequate progress in demonstrating a better capacity for sustained improvement.



Changes in staffing, both at the time of the last inspection and over the last two years, have had detrimental impact on the achievement of pupils across the school. The school's self-evaluation has rightly judged that outcomes for the large majority of pupils are inadequate. Teacher assessments were inaccurate and prevented the school from reaching targets for both Key Stage 1 and 2. Since 2007, the school's results in English, mathematics and science at Key Stage 2 have deteriorated to significantly below average in 2009. Progress made by the very large majority of pupils in relation to their starting points is inadequate. Standards in mathematics declined further from results in 2008, and the proportion of pupils reaching higher levels also fell, despite this being identified as an area for improvement at the last inspection. The school's internal data for this year show that pupils' mathematical knowledge is steadily improving and a greater number of Year 6 pupils are on track to attain higher standards in mathematics.

At Key Stage 1, standards in writing, reading and mathematics fell sharply from broadly average in 2008 to significantly below average in 2009. Pupils' work seen in lesson observations confirms that writing is at a very low standard. Planning lessons which require pupils to write at length necessitates rapid improvement throughout both key stages to drive up standards in English by Year 6.

The majority of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are starting to make satisfactory progress as a result of targeted work to support specific learning needs and effective guidance from learning support assistants.

Senior leaders have established a more cohesive system for tracking pupils' progress and are slowly securing accurate teacher assessments through more rigorous moderation procedures. The school is increasingly data rich because of better tracking systems but teachers have still not got to grips with devising lessons that allow for independent learning and flexibility in the pace of lessons. Teachers now know what levels pupils should be working towards but a gap exists in using this information to structure learning that is challenging for more able pupils while accommodating the needs of less able pupils. The headteacher acknowledges that significant improvement is needed to deeply embed the use of assessment data in lesson planning. Senior leaders more frequently monitor teaching but the school's target of 50% good or better lessons by December 2009 was not met. Evidence from inspection corroborates that teaching is satisfactory, as judged in the school's self-evaluation.

Some good quality marking includes purposeful comments that help pupils know how to improve their work. However, the quality of marking remains inconsistent. Some pupils could not identify the levels they are currently working at, their targets or how to improve their work.

Pupils' multicultural awareness shows some improvement. Pupils have basic knowledge of faiths other than the Christian faith. Pupils commented how much they enjoyed a visit to a synagogue as well as the new cultural diversity week in the



summer. Links with schools internationally are emerging and Year 6 pupils have pen pals through a link with a school in France. Pupils' knowledge of non-Western cultures remains at a more rudimentary level.

Despite working effectively with the education welfare officer to support families of children who find regular attendance challenging, the school's overall attendance figure remains below national average.

The local authority ensures that external adviser support, coupled with support from the School Improvement Partner, keeps the school focused on key improvement strategies. The full impact of these has yet to raise achievement. The headteacher has worked well with the School Improvement Partner to assess the key issues facing the school as well as helping staff and governors become more familiar with interpretation of assessment data. Governors are just starting to hold all leaders more stringently to account for pupils' progress.

The current staffing position, limited development of middle leadership and lack of substantial progress since February 2008 means capacity for sustained improvement is inadequate. As a result of the deterioration in achievement and fragility in the leadership capacity of the school, the inspection has raised very serious concerns that may affect the timing of the next inspection.

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 sincerely

Joanna Beckford-Hall
Her Majesty's Inspector

