

Tribal
1-4 Portland Square
Bristol
BS2 8RR

T 0300 123 1231
Text Phone: 0161 6188524
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk

Direct T 0117 3115319
Direct F 0117 3150430
Direct email: matthew.parker@tribalgroup.com

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Mrs L McDonald
Headteacher
St Margaret's School, Tintinhull
School Close
Tintinhull
Yeovil
Somerset
BA22 8PX

Dear Mrs McDonald

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools: monitoring inspection of St Margaret's School, Tintinhull

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 2 December 2011, for the time you gave to our telephone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during the inspection. I am also grateful to the Chair of the Governing Body who gave his time to speak to me. Please pass on my thanks to the staff who also spent time in conversation with me and to the pupils for being so friendly and helpful.

The basic characteristics of your school are very similar to those at the time of the last inspection. The headteacher, who was newly appointed at the time of the inspection, has now been in post for 18 months. The deputy headteacher has been promoted to a headship elsewhere and a new senior teacher was appointed in September 2011. The governing body has a new Chair and a new structure. Roles and responsibilities have been reviewed.

As a result of the inspection on 18 and 19 May 2010, 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 good progress in making improvements and good progress in demonstrating a better capacity for sustained improvement.

The school has received appropriate support from the local authority through the two visits that it has made to the school. The headteacher has inspired confidence, renewed the motivation of staff and developed a better capacity for improvement. She quickly formed an accurate view of the school and got to grips with what needs

to be done. Effectively supported by members of the governing body, senior leaders and the staff, she has united the school in its focus on improvement. As a result, there has been an upward trend in attainment at the end of Year 6. An increased emphasis on challenging more able pupils has resulted in greater numbers of pupils reaching Level 5, exceeding the school target. Progress has also improved for all pupils. Work in pupils' books and pupils' progress in lessons confirm this. For example, pupils of average ability in a Years 3 and 4 mathematics lesson delighted in using real pizzas to find fractions of a shape. The teacher's effective use of her own good knowledge and understanding to structure small steps in learning helped them to realise that eight eighths are equal to one whole, something they had not understood before.

Staff value training days, which they say are inspirational. These, together with planning in pairs, teaching in teams and a rigorous programme of monitoring and evaluation, have made a significant improvement to the proportion of effective teaching within the school. Staff say that they are now 'buzzing' with ideas and are far more creative. Effective training of teaching assistants has empowered them to make an important contribution to the school's ability to tailor intervention strategies in order to close learning gaps between the lowest achievers and the rest. Tasks are explained more clearly and are now accurately matched to pupils' ability. New tracking routines help teachers to check the progress of pupils and use this information to effectively modify planning. All pupils are now clear about what they are learning and enjoy brisk pace and challenge in lessons to stretch their thinking.

Accurate tracking of progress means that realistic yet challenging targets are set for each year group through the school. Regular checks quickly identify any underachievement and give teachers a good knowledge and understanding of their pupils which they can use to tailor plans on a daily basis. The headteacher and senior leaders have established a more rigorous programme for monitoring the work of the school and this has raised attainment, accelerated progress and ensured a consistency in the quality of teaching and learning across the school. Performance management for teachers has improved and is securely in place. An accurate analysis of data, including of pupils' progress, informs the school development plan, providing a more useful tool for improvement. The governing body now has a new Chair and has organised committees, systems and procedures for governors to gain better access to information. All members of the governing body are more aware of their roles and responsibilities. Relationships between the school and governing body are good and members visit the school regularly. This, together with feedback from coordinators and information from the headteacher, is ensuring that the governing body has an improved capacity to improve and, as a result, is better equipped to hold the school to account for improvement.

The school has now established a two-year rolling curricular programme which meets the needs of mixed-age classes more effectively. A detailed audit of materials, which were purchased before the appointment of the new headteacher, has ensured that there is a progression of skills and that any gaps are fully covered. Grouping

pupils by ability, a full programme of well-tailored intervention strategies delivered by skilled teaching assistants and a comprehensive programme for gifted and talented pupils have ensured that the needs of pupils of all abilities, including the more able, are fully met.

With the school now playing a significant role within its own community it has already made plans to widen its scope to learn about other communities further afield. However, while it has established an e-mail link with a school in Zambia, links with schools in contrasting areas of the United Kingdom still remain a weaker aspect of pupils' understanding.

This concerted action to successfully address the recommendations of the last inspection, and raise standards, based on the school's clear and accurate review of its performance, establishes that the school is in a much better position than it was two years ago and has made good progress in demonstrating a better capacity for sustained improvement.

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

Barbara Atcheson

Additional Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in May 2010

- Ensure there is more good or better teaching in all classes by December 2010 by:
 - sharing the good and outstanding practice in the school
 - ensuring the teachers consistently use assessment information to carefully match activities to the wide range of abilities in their classes
 - ensuring intended learning is clearly explained with sufficient challenge and pace maintained throughout lessons.

- Introduce by July 2010 a clear system for setting end-of-year targets and monitoring progress towards them for all pupils in Years 1 to 6.

- Strengthen procedures to check the school's progress by:
 - establishing by September 2010 an annual programme for monitoring the work of the school
 - improving within the next year arrangements for managing the performance of teachers
 - by October 2010 increasing the quality and range of information received by the governing body to enable it to hold the school fully to account.

- Establish long- and medium-term curriculum plans by December 2010 that:
 - incorporate where appropriate recently purchased materials
 - fully reflect the needs of the most able
 - provide increased opportunities for all pupils to learn about communities beyond their local area.