

Tribal Education
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** 0845 123 6002
www.ofsted.gov.uk **Direct email:** rebecca.jackson@tribalgroup.com

27 January 2011

Ms Liz Brand
The Acting Executive Headteacher
Sennen School
Sennen
Penzance
Cornwall
TR19 7AW

Dear Ms Brand

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Sennen School

Following my visit to your school on 25 and 26 January 2011, 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 first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in July 2010. The full list of the areas for improvement which were identified during that inspection are set out in the annex to this letter. The monitoring inspection report is attached and the main judgement is set out below.

Progress since being subject to special measures – good.

Further newly qualified teachers may not 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 governing body and the Director of Children's Services for Cornwall.

Yours sincerely

Robert Pyner
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning in Years 3 to 6 by:
 - ensuring pupils' work is assessed regularly and accurately
 - ensuring that ongoing assessment is used consistently to plan lessons at the appropriate level for pupils' age and ability
 - ensuring that age-appropriate National Curriculum levels are used in all subjects when planning work for mixed-age classes to ensure continuity and progression in learning
 - improving the quality of marking so that pupils are clear about how well they are doing and how they can improve their work
 - improving pupils' skills and understanding in mathematics.
- Improve the leadership and management of teaching and learning by:
 - ensuring data is accurate and analysing it more rigorously to track the progress of all groups of pupils
 - driving improvements in the quality of teaching by rigorous monitoring of planning and classroom performance and taking effective action to address any weaknesses
 - ensuring that governors are rigorous in holding the school to account for tackling weaknesses in provision and improving outcomes for pupils.

Special measures: monitoring of Sennen School

Report from the first monitoring inspection on 25 and 26 January 2010

Evidence

The inspector observed the school's work, scrutinised documents, visited lessons and looked at a wide range of the pupils' written work. He met with the acting executive headteacher, teaching staff, the chair and vice-chair of the governing body, pupils and a representative of the local authority.

Context

At the end of the summer term 2010, a teacher who was in post at the time of the inspection in July left the school. In September 2010 two teachers joined the staff, one a newly qualified teacher. In mid September the substantive headteacher became ill and has been absent since then. The local authority, with the agreement of the governing body, arranged for the headteacher of a local primary school to work in partnership with Sennen and this began in late September. The role was defined as an executive headteacher and she divides her time between both schools; three days at Sennen and two at her substantive school. Since November a part-time teacher has been absent through sickness and the class is taught by an experienced supply teacher. At the time of the monitoring inspection none of the teaching staff were working at the school when it was inspected in July.

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

In the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 attainment is broadly average. At Key Stage 2 attainment remains below expected levels for writing and mathematics, although there is clear evidence of improvement. Tracking of the progress made by pupils since September shows gains, and markedly so in mathematics, but from a low base. There remains a legacy of underachievement. Older pupils' understanding of number facts and patterns is not as strong as it could be, particularly in relation to multiplication and division. This leads to a lack of confidence when pupils are working on calculations and applying their understanding to word problems. The quality of pupils' writing shows improvement as a result of effective and focused teaching which supports imaginative writing. An example of this was seen during the inspection when a Year 3 pupil suggested replacing 'said' with 'sneeringly replied' in a lesson about using dialogue to improve story writing.

Progress since the last section 5 inspection on the areas for improvement:

- improving pupils' skills and understanding in mathematics – satisfactory.

Other relevant pupil outcomes

Pupils' behaviour in lessons and their attitudes to learning are good. The school has recently produced a questionnaire with items developed by school council members. All pupils have completed this survey and they note positively the changes within the school. Pupils particularly appreciate the colourful displays around the school and the help they receive from adults, but would like more clubs. Pupils are welcoming to visitors, polite and willing to talk about their work. Throughout the autumn the school had a focus on improving attendance. As a result, from September to December the school's attendance rate was over 95%, which is above the national average for primary schools.

The effectiveness of provision

At the time of the last report there was a lack of secure information about the levels at which the pupils were working, leading to lessons which did not meet learning needs. Staff at the school, led by the acting executive headteacher and supported by local authority consultants, have worked well to update progress tracking information so that it is accurate and fit for purpose. Assessment tracking of the progress made by individual pupils is now secure and regularly updated. This has enabled teachers to use this information to prepare lessons in English and mathematics which challenge individuals and groups of pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, with activities which are appropriate to their abilities and interest them. This is particularly effective in the class for the older pupils where there is detailed planning for Years 4 to 6 and a wide range of ability. This good level of planning is reinforced by routines which are well understood by pupils, and effective support from the teaching assistant. As a result, the quality of teaching is good and accelerating the progress made by pupils.

Some success has been achieved in introducing individual pupil targets, particularly in writing and mathematics. Pupils' books contain their individual targets in these subjects and pupils can talk confidently about how well they are working to achieve them. During a mathematics lesson for the older pupils the teacher specifically outlined the expectations for different groups and links were made to individual targets. This helped the pupils to understand what they had to do and the specific learning tasks they were undertaking.

Although the school has developed detailed planning based on National Curriculum levels and pupils' prior attainment in English and mathematics, this is less well developed in other subjects. Staff were correct to concentrate on these two key subjects initially and the school is now beginning to work on a broader range of learning to develop a clear curriculum cycle throughout the school. However, this being said, the pupils do benefit from a broad and balanced curriculum offering opportunities to use and develop their knowledge, skills and interests.

Staff have worked hard to develop the quality of marking to support learning. All classes use the 'Wow, How, Now' system which provides support and encouragement, an idea of how improvement can be achieved and a specific activity which an individual pupil should complete to embed understanding. Of these, the second element is the most underused but marking is regular and the pupils understand the system and can explain what they have done as a result. However, the presentation in some of the older pupils' books could be better. Overall, the marking system is becoming embedded as an effective tool in supporting learning, but there is still some inconsistency in its use.

Progress since the last section 5 inspection on the areas for improvement:

- ensuring pupils' work is assessed regularly and accurately – good
- ensuring that ongoing assessment is used consistently to plan lessons at the appropriate level for pupils' age and ability – good
- ensuring that age-appropriate National Curriculum levels are used in all subjects when planning work for mixed-age classes to ensure continuity and progression in learning – satisfactory
- improving the quality of marking so that pupils are clear about how well they are doing and how they can improve their work – satisfactory.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The highly experienced acting executive headteacher has brought about clarity and educational direction and purpose to the work of the school. She has, working with staff, local authority personnel and governors, accurately identified the weaknesses, and strengths, within the school. These early evaluations of provision and outcomes were rigorous, accurate and focused well on what needed to be done to improve the quality of education. She quickly established a very good relationship with the three new members of the teaching staff, support staff and governors. A recent survey of parents shows a positive response to the changes she has initiated.

Together with this drive and determination, the acting executive headteacher has been able to adapt the systems from her substantive school to swiftly implement improved management systems. Developments have included important changes to teachers' planning, systems for monitoring the quality of teaching and learning and a rigorous overhaul of pupils' performance tracking. The developments to improve the assessment and monitoring of pupils' progress and attainment provided a baseline from which to measure improvements. Since its introduction, there have been two complete rounds of assessment for all pupils and this provides clear evidence of accelerated progress. Staff have readily taken on these new systems using information effectively in their planning. Monitoring of teaching and learning is very regular and rigorous, supporting improvement across the school. Teaching staff have found this effective in helping them to improve their teaching, as well as to settle into a new school in challenging circumstances.

Governors have supported the acting executive headteacher and staff in the changes implemented so far. They have undertaken a range of courses offered by the local authority and established a monitoring group to guide improvements. Governors visit the school regularly and report on these visits through a formal note which is shared with staff and governors. The governors have benefited from the guidance of an experienced consultant who has worked with them to develop systems for monitoring outcomes. The local authority has supported governors by the provision of an experienced additional governor who has taken on the responsibility for monitoring and evaluating data on pupil outcomes. This has been an important development in providing information with which governors can challenge the school. Governors confirm that this has been instrumental in developing the general level of confidence within the governing body to focus on improvements.

Overall, the school has benefited from the appointment of a very experienced acting executive headteacher with drive and determination, a responsive staff, governors who are committed to improving outcomes for pupils and the goodwill of parents. The support provided by the local authority has been used effectively to underpin improvements. The challenge for all is to build on the good progress made since the last inspection to improve further the achievement of pupils. There is still a considerable amount of work to be done to ensure that all pupils are achieving as well as they could be expected to, or better. For governors and the local authority a further challenge is to develop plans to ensure the sustained long-term leadership and management of the school.

Progress since last section 5 inspection on the areas for improvement:

- ensuring data is accurate and analysing it more rigorously to track the progress of all groups of pupils – good
- driving improvements in the quality of teaching by rigorous monitoring of planning and classroom performance and taking effective action to address any weaknesses – outstanding
- ensuring that governors are rigorous in holding the school to account for tackling weaknesses in provision and improving outcomes for pupils – good.

External support

Following the inspection and subsequent absence through sickness of the substantive headteacher, the local authority acted swiftly and appropriately to put in place an experienced leader. The arrangement between the two schools has provided Sennen with clear and unequivocal leadership, which is demonstrated in the wide range of initiatives that have been introduced.

The local authority statement of action is fit for purpose and provides a good framework for improvement. It is being closely followed by local authority officers and consultants who are working with the school. The actions identified in the statement of action have been carried out and have made a good contribution to building effective foundations for the future. The school has benefited well from a

range of support from local authority consultants for early years, literacy and numeracy. The support for governors, including the appointment of an additional governor, has been effective. The overall support provided by the local authority has had a positive impact on the standards in teaching and learning and school tracking data confirm improvements in the progress made by pupils.

Priorities for further improvement

- The governors and local authority to develop plans to ensure the sustained long-term leadership and management of the school.