

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:** sarah.cartlidge@tribalgroup.com

20 January 2011

Mr P Hutchinson
The Headteacher
The Vyne Community School
Vyne Road
Basingstoke
Hampshire
RG21 5PB

Dear Mr Hutchinson

Special measures: monitoring inspection of The Vyne Community School

Following my visit with Lucie Calow to your school on 18 and 19 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 inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in September 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 judgements are set out below.

Progress since being subject to special measures – satisfactory.

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 Hampshire.

Yours sincerely

Adrian Lyons
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- In order to raise students' attainment, accelerate their progress by:
 - ensuring that weaknesses in their writing skills are identified and tackled effectively
 - monitoring students' written work and giving them precise strategies for improving it.
- Raise the quality of teaching by ensuring that:
 - lessons are planned to meet students' individual needs, based on assessment of their abilities and need
 - students are offered a variety of activities that enhance their motivation and interests in all subjects
 - effective teaching strategies, apparent in some subjects, are used widely across the school.
- Increase the impact of leadership and management by:
 - improving the accuracy of evaluation and planning
 - setting a clear long term vision for the future of the school.

Special measures: monitoring of The Vyne Community School

Report from the first monitoring inspection on 18 and 19 January 2011

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, senior and middle leaders, a group of classroom teachers, groups of pupils, two governors, and a representative from the local authority.

Context

There have been no significant changes to the context of the school since the last inspection.

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

The most recent public examination results are as reported in the September 2010 inspection report. Progress in the lessons observed was inconsistent. Whilst it was good in six of the nineteen lessons observed, it was inadequate in a further six and satisfactory in the rest. Inadequate progress was usually related to teaching taking insufficient account of the different ability of students, leading to some groups of pupils making insufficient progress, or to behavioural issues. The two were often related. In some subjects students continue to do very well. Even within these subjects there is often variability in the achievement of different classes. A legacy of underachievement has led to too many students working below national expectations for each age group. Progress needs to accelerate sharply in order to close the gap.

There have been significant improvements in the availability of data on the progress of students. Recent student progress interviews have been valued by students and teachers. The data on students' progress used at these meetings are much more accurate than in the past. While classroom teachers now have good data on their students, they are not yet using it sufficiently to adapt their lessons to focus on the progress of different groups and individuals.

The school has put in place the building blocks to improve students' writing, but these have not yet had sufficient effect on raising attainment in lessons. Staff training has been well received and initial guidance has been clear and appropriate. Little impact was obvious in lessons, but the local authority reports improvement in writing over the last two terms. The school now needs to monitor the effectiveness of the training and guidance to ensure greater impact.

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

- ensuring that weaknesses in students' writing skills are identified and tackled effectively – satisfactory.

Other relevant pupil outcomes

The school has appropriately identified attendance and behaviour as an additional key area for improvement. The school has included this in its improvement plans, alongside the areas identified in the previous inspection report. Inspectors agree that this is a priority area and its identification is evidence that the school's ability to evaluate its provision has improved. Poor behaviour and low attendance are particular problems in lessons which are not well planned to engage students or meet the varied needs and interests of students of different abilities. Teachers are reluctant to challenge the behaviour of students outside classrooms.

In the best lessons, behaviour is good and some teachers have very good classroom management skills. This high expectation of behaviour needs to extend beyond the classroom, with consistent application of rules and good order in corridors between lessons. Currently, boisterous behaviour in the corridors spills over to delay the start of some lessons. During lessons a small minority of students roam corridors and some teachers are unaware of the location of students from their lesson. The school now has good systems to catch up with students missing lessons, but teachers are inconsistent in their use.

The effectiveness of provision

The school has taken steps to improve the quality of teaching. A programme of staff development has been put in place covering the features of good teaching and learning. This has been very well received by staff but is in its very early days. There is evidence of some positive impact from this training. Most teachers are now planning lessons with objectives that all students must reach, further objectives for some more able students and more stretching objectives for the most able. Monitoring is checking that this hierarchy of objectives is present, but the extent to which they actually make a difference to what then happens in the lesson is variable.

Senior managers now assess the quality of teaching more rigorously and frequently. Teachers have responded to this positively. As a result, the school has been able to put in place coaching and support to bring about improvement. However, there remains far too much inadequate teaching and too little that is good or better. The quality of teaching is not only inconsistent across the school but within subjects.

There are pockets of good teaching. However, it is difficult to identify common factors as there is not yet a systematic approach in the school which would enable colleagues to move from satisfactory to good.

The quality of marking has greatly improved. Marking is now regular and usually involves helpful comments to students on how to improve their work.

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

- monitoring students' written work and giving them precise strategies for improving it – good
- raise the quality of teaching – satisfactory.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The last inspection took place in the first two weeks of a re-shaped senior leadership team. This team has been crucial to the satisfactory level of improvement that has taken place so far. A clear action plan for improvement has been drawn up and realistic stepping stones towards improvement have been established by senior leaders. There is now an urgent need to see faster impact resulting from these actions. Senior leaders are now beginning to tackle what one of them described as 'acceptance of the mediocre ... or the just about satisfactory'. Since the inspection there has been increased monitoring by senior leaders and middle leaders are beginning to develop this role. The impact of monitoring is seen in the improved marking in books. Middle leaders refer to increased accountability and a belief that 'things will happen this time'. Whilst monitoring and accountability have improved, there remains an urgent need to enhance the comprehensiveness and robustness of line management to ensure greater consistency of practice across the school.

Governance has improved since the inspection. The governing body has been enhanced by six additional local authority appointments. Governors are beginning to increase their understanding of the school by attachment to subject departments and the governing body is re-structuring to have more frequent and efficient scrutiny. Governors correctly identify the main immediate priority for the school as improving students' progress and achievement.

Inspectors spoke to focus groups of staff and students. These discussions were very revealing in identifying the variability in classroom practice. The headteacher is meeting with a group of students regarding particular grievances, but there are no opportunities for staff and students to routinely contribute to monitoring.

Progress since the last section 5 inspection:

- increase the impact of leadership and management – satisfactory.

External support

The local authority's statement of action is clear and well reasoned. A cogent rationale is given for supporting the present governing body which the authority has enhanced with additional appointments. The local authority preceded the Ofsted inspection placing the school in special measures by its own inspection in May 2010

which found provision to be inadequate. Since then, while there has been a lot of support, the impact is only beginning to be seen because the school has only recently begun to develop the capacity to improve. Local authority advisers have worked successfully with senior leaders on issues such as improving the use of data and on strategies to improve writing. The local authority, along with the 'gaining ground' project, has helped the school to reach a helpful and effective partnership agreement with a successful school and to buy in consultants. The local authority remains rightly concerned that school improvement since their May visit has been insufficiently rapid and continues to monitor the situation.

Priorities for further improvement

- Ensure that poor behaviour is tackled consistently and that positive, mutually respectful behaviour characterises relationships in the school.
- Reduce the rate of both overall and persistent absenteeism.
- Ensure lesson attendance is punctual.
- Build on the improved use of data to improve teachers' planning and use assessment in lessons to set work that challenges appropriately all students of differing abilities.
- Develop self-evaluation by drawing systematically on the views of staff and students.