

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

7 February 2011

Mrs Hester Wooller
The Interim Headteacher
Shinfield St Mary's CofE Junior School
Chestnut Crescent
Shinfield
Reading
Berkshire
RG2 9EJ

Dear Mrs Wooller

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Shinfield St Mary's CofE Junior School

Following my visit to your school on 2 and 3 February 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 third monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in November 2009. 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.

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – 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 interim executive board, the Director of Children's Services for Wokingham and the Director of Education for the Diocese of Oxford.

Yours sincerely

Alison Storey
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Raise attainment, particularly in writing and mathematics, so that it is at least in line with the national average by July 2010.
- Improve pupils' progress, particularly in writing and mathematics, so that it is consistently satisfactory or better throughout the school by July 2010 by:
 - ensuring that teachers provide pupils with challenging work that meets their needs well
 - involving pupils fully in understanding how they can improve their work.
- Develop the curriculum so that it is stimulating and motivating with opportunities for pupils to develop their thinking skills and develop as independent learners.
- Develop the skills and activities of leaders and managers at all levels in monitoring and evaluating the school's performance in order to bring about rapid and sustained improvement.

Special measures: monitoring of Shinfield St Mary's CofE Junior School

Report from the third monitoring inspection on 2 and 3 February 2011

Evidence

The inspector observed the school's work, including lessons taught by all teachers, scrutinised documents, including those which track pupils' progress, and looked at pupils' written work. She met with the interim headteacher, staff and pupils, the chair of the interim executive board and representatives of the local authority.

Context

The previous headteacher left the school on 3 December 2010. The interim headteacher took up post on 6 December 2010 and the recruitment process for a substantive headteacher began this term. The interim executive board decided that the initial advertisement did not attract sufficient candidates of a high enough quality. It is currently advertising for an associate headteacher, to work alongside the interim headteacher from the beginning of the summer term and to take on the role of permanent headteacher from September 2011. The process of reducing teaching assistant hours as a result of a budget deficit has been completed. From January 2011 teaching assistant support has reduced from 156 to 76 hours per week. These hours are allocated to provide a teaching assistant in each class every morning, and a special needs teaching assistant for three days per week to work with individual pupils and small groups.

The chair of the interim executive board has retired since the last monitoring visit and another member has resigned. A new chair was appointed with effect from 28 September 2010 and two parents have joined the interim executive board since the last monitoring visit. There has been an overall fall in pupil numbers since the last monitoring inspection, with twelve pupils leaving for a range of reasons, and four joining.

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

Evidence from the lessons observed and from discussions with pupils during the monitoring inspection indicates that day to day and over the course of a week, pupils are either consolidating what they have learnt previously, or moving forwards. This is confirmed by incremental progress seen in pupils' books. Pupils generally show positive attitudes to school and to learning, although the presentation of their work is an area for development. In lessons most pupils are well behaved and get on with the tasks set for them. There is a tangible sense that they are less likely to think that they cannot do something and ask for help, and more likely to be willing to have a go at working independently of the teacher or teaching assistant.

The school's data indicate that over time the large majority of pupils are making progress. So far this academic year, for the most part between two thirds and three

quarters of children have made measurable progress in writing and mathematics. The percentage the school consider are on track to reach their end-of-year targets has increased considerably since last term, although the school acknowledges that in part this may be a result of teachers under assessing pupils last term. However, this still means that at this point there are between a quarter and a third of pupils who have not made measurable progress and for whom the school cannot easily demonstrate whether they have made progress or not. The school's analysis of current data to show the progress of different groups is still at an early stage. Nationally published data indicate that in the past the pupils who joined the school at the expected level for their age made least progress, particularly in mathematics, and that some pupils capable of achieving the higher levels in English did not fulfil their potential.

Because the progress pupils make over time has been variable in the past, and has not yet accelerated sufficiently to eradicate previous underachievement, standards are still lower than they should be given pupils' starting points. Unsurprisingly, there are higher proportions of pupils at the expected level in mathematics in the lower year groups, simply because they have not been in the school as long. However, the picture is more variable in writing where the lowest proportions are currently found in Years 3 and 5.

Progress since the last monitoring inspection on the areas for improvement:

- raise attainment, particularly in writing and mathematics, so that it is at least in line with the national average by July 2010 – satisfactory
- improve pupils' progress, particularly in writing and mathematics, so that it is consistently satisfactory or better throughout the school by July 2010 – satisfactory.

Other relevant pupil outcomes

Attendance levels fell considerably in the autumn term as a result of high levels of sickness. The school's data indicate an improvement this term, which was reflected in attendance levels during the monitoring inspection. However, there is a small group of pupils whose attendance is low or who are persistently late. Tracking data for these pupils indicate that there is often a link between their attendance or punctuality and slow progress. The headteacher is working with the parents of these pupils and, where necessary, the education welfare officer to emphasise the importance of regular attendance and punctuality.

In the main, behaviour continues to be a relative strength. Most pupils are well behaved in lessons and around the school. Particularly worthy of note was the mature way that the oldest pupils settled quickly and calmly to learning at the beginning of morning and afternoon sessions. There is growing evidence that pupils are learning to take responsibility for themselves. They know how to keep themselves safe and healthy and the work of the school council in shaping improvements to the school environment is developing.

The effectiveness of provision

Lessons observed during the monitoring inspection and scrutiny of the school's own recent monitoring suggests that teaching is usually at least satisfactory. Teachers are increasingly challenging pupils to work independently, although there is still some way to go in ensuring that pupils have the strategies they need to work systematically and to check the accuracy of their work for themselves. There is a greater emphasis on talking about what pupils are learning, although at times this stops short of the pupils being expected to articulate this for themselves. The role of teaching assistants is clearer. Recently established liaison files ensure that staff have copies of planning that make clear their role in each lesson. In turn, they use the folders to make notes that contribute to the ongoing assessments of pupils.

Teachers take account of pupils' prior attainment to differentiate their plans for three different levels of ability. Increasingly they are assessing pupils' learning during and between lessons to identify what pupils can or cannot do and adapting their teaching accordingly. The system for ongoing assessment against criteria for different levels has become more established since the last monitoring inspection. Pupils are more aware of the level they are currently working at and what they need to do to move to the next level. Marking is generally regular, but there are still inconsistencies in giving pupils feedback on how to improve and time to respond to teachers' comments to correct or improve their work.

The school has greater confidence in the accuracy of teachers' assessments, but recognises there is a need for further moderation, particularly in writing and in the immediate future intends to continue to use tests to confirm teachers' judgements. Involving pupils in self and peer assessment is still work in progress. It is part of everyday practice in Year 6 where pupils are encouraged to assess their own and others' work during and at the end of lessons. In other classes it is not always an integral part of teaching and too often pupils are self-assessing inaccurately and teachers are not picking this up and addressing it immediately.

In the short term, the new headteacher has increased the amount of time for teaching literacy and numeracy to try to address the issue of underachievement in writing and mathematics. She has introduced a different approach to teaching writing, whereby pupils work on particular skills over a period of time and then apply them to write for a sustained period of time. As yet it is too soon to evaluate how effective these changes have been, although anecdotally the extended writing sessions are developing pupils' independence and resilience as writers. The school recognises that, given the investment of teaching time in these strategies, it is important they keep a careful check to ensure that they are implemented consistently and are having a positive impact on pupils' achievement. At the same time, staff have been determined to maintain the development of the new curriculum topics introduced last academic year to motivate pupils and enthuse pupils. There are plans to review how this is going during the summer term and the school is aware of the need to ensure that there is appropriate coverage and progression over time within each subject.

Progress since the last monitoring inspection on the area for improvement:

- develop the curriculum so that it is stimulating and motivating with opportunities for pupils to develop their thinking skills and develop as independent learners – satisfactory.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

A greater sense of urgency is apparent at all levels. The interim executive board has more rigorous systems in place for holding the headteacher to account. The monitoring procedures introduced by the new chair help the board to keep a careful check on the effectiveness of the actions taken. As a result, members have a clearer picture of the school's progress against the key priorities, in particular pupils' current achievement. The interim headteacher has brought a greater focus as to what needs to be done and, importantly, a sense of purpose that it can be done, even within the constraints of a small and relatively inexperienced staff. Crucially, she is working with staff to build capacity for the future. Teachers and teaching assistants comment that they have never worked as hard, but that they can see the purpose of what they are doing and are amazed at how much has been achieved in a short time. Time and support have been invested in middle leaders since the last monitoring inspection and it is evident from discussions with them that they are beginning to grow into their roles. However, there is currently no-one with clear responsibility for overseeing provision for more able pupils.

Although the interim headteacher acknowledges there is still more to do to refine the tracking and target setting procedures, the school's data are much more coherent and presented in a way which show current attainment levels and progress since joining the school. Analysis of different groups has begun but as yet does not include more able pupils, although they have been identified. The interim headteacher and one of the local authority consultants are providing some additional teaching for some of these pupils. Target-setting procedures have been reviewed to take account of expected progress between the end of Year 2 and the end of Year 6 as well as over the current year and, as such, are starting to pinpoint better previous underachievement. A clearer picture of current attainment has informed the planning of intervention groups for those pupils who have not achieved as well as they should have done so far, and booster classes for Year 6 pupils have started earlier this year. Pupil progress meetings are planned at which the headteacher will discuss with each class teacher what needs to be done to ensure each pupil reaches their end-of-year target.

Progress since the last monitoring inspection on the area for improvement:

- develop the skills and activities of leaders and managers at all levels in monitoring and evaluating the school's performance in order to bring about rapid and sustained improvement – satisfactory.

External support

Local authority support has been more effective since the last monitoring inspection. There is a greater sense of shared responsibility, better communication and cooperation between different partners. Regular review meetings have been instigated as part of the local authority's school improvement strategy for high priority schools to monitor progress and identify next steps to be taken by the local authority, school and interim executive board. Consultant support has been better defined and provided increased capacity within the school as well as developing staff. Where a coaching model has been agreed and adopted by both the consultant and member of the school staff, support has been more successful. Close work between the diocese and local authority ensured the interim headteacher was appointed in time to minimise disruption to the school.