

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

7 February 2011

Mrs Chris Gayler
Interim Headteacher
The Mark Way School
Batchelors Barn Road
Andover
Hampshire
SP10 1HR

Dear Mrs Gayler

Special measures: monitoring inspection of The Mark Way School

Following my visit to your school on 3 and 4 February, 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 July 2010. The full list of the areas for improvement which were identified during that inspection is 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

Helen Barter
Additional Inspector

Annex

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

- Improve the quality of leadership and management by:
 - implementing the agreed interim management structure, with clear roles and responsibilities being understood by the team
 - establishing rigorous and robust systems to monitor all aspects of provision
 - improving governance through developing the management skills needed to hold the school to account.

- Improve students' progress by:
 - developing and implementing strategies to manage consistently students' behaviour
 - promoting good attendance through the development and implementation of effective strategies
 - developing and implementing effective systems to set targets which challenge students and give a clear picture of their progress.

- improve the quality of teaching and learning by:
 - ensuring that teachers' planning clearly identifies the needs of students and how these will be met in every lesson
 - making sure that feedback to students tells them what they need to do to improve their work and reach the next level or grade.

Special measures: monitoring of The Mark Way School

Report from the first monitoring inspection on 1 and 2 February 2011

Evidence

The inspector observed the school's work, visited lessons in all classes, scrutinised documents and met with the interim headteacher, senior leaders, groups of staff, the school's Connexions advisor, the chair of the governing body, and a representative from the local authority.

Context

The headteacher announced his retirement at the end of the summer term 2010 prior to the inspection taking place. The local authority had already secured interim leadership from the headteacher of Norman Gate Primary School for two terms from September 2010. It is now looking to secure interim leadership for the summer term 2011 and substantive leadership from September 2011. The senior leadership team, which was in place in July, was changed in the autumn term to include the assistant headteacher and roles were reallocated. The current senior leadership team consists of the interim headteacher, deputy headteacher, assistant headteacher, key stage 3 leader and key stage 4 leader. A senior leadership team was put in place in July 2010 consisting of the deputy headteacher, an assistant headteacher on a temporary promotion and the Key Stage 3 leader. The Key Stage 4 leader, who is also the English subject leader, is on maternity leave and returns after Easter. The governing body is made up of almost entirely new members. A new chair of governors was elected in October 2010. The previous chair of governors remains as the vice chair. There is a vacancy for a parent governor. One member of staff is on long-term sick leave. A replacement is being found for the finance officer who retires at Easter.

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

Since the last inspection pupils' rate of progress remains inconsistent across the school. There are a few elements of good progress, where teachers have a good understanding of pupils' skills and plan enjoyable activities which meet their needs well. However, too often pupils do not learn enough in lessons because tasks are not sufficiently differentiated to challenge them at the right levels and the curriculum is not adjusted well enough to meet their specific learning needs.

In the better lessons seen, pupils worked in small groups, with an adult using clear and well-focused questions to help them. They made good progress because the activities planned were relevant and pupils could understand what they were expected to learn and why. In other lessons, adults took too much control of the activity, with pupils becoming passive and not understanding what they were supposed to do.

The teachers' expertise in assessing the National Curriculum levels at which pupils are working is underdeveloped. A recent analysis by senior leaders shows test data for December 2009 and April 2010 were entirely inaccurate and could not be used to analyse the rate of pupils' progress or make any predictions for their future learning. Staff have not yet developed sufficient knowledge to accurately measure pupils' learning steps taken in lessons and so are not able to set accurate individual learning targets for them. As a result, pupils are not made aware of the next steps that they need to take to achieve higher levels of attainment.

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

- develop and implement effective systems to set targets which challenge pupils and give a clear picture of their progress – inadequate.

Other relevant pupil outcomes

The number of days lost to fixed-term exclusions has reduced significantly since September. Only a handful of pupils account for these now, compared with one quarter of pupils on roll who were excluded during the last academic year. In part, this reflects the pupils' increasingly positive attitudes to school, who themselves say that 'behaviour is getting better'. Pupils are responding very well to the new reward system, appreciating the 'stamp sheets' which celebrate success and tangible rewards such as outings. During the monitoring visit, staff were consistently using the reward system for good behaviour and linking this to pupils' behaviour targets. Data generated from the results of these rewards demonstrate that, overall, pupils' behaviour is improving. Members of the school council say that pupils mostly get on well together now and that staff are always there to help and listen to them.

Nevertheless, unacceptable behaviour does still occur regularly and there are too many 'internal' exclusions each day. The impact of sustained inadequacies in behaviour management over a period of time is still evident, particularly amongst some older pupils who are resistant to recent necessary changes in the day-to-day management of the school. The school is aware that the 'detention' system is an ineffective deterrent to poor behaviour. The school council is currently working with the local authority's Behaviour Support Team to review this system and to recommend improvements.

Since September, senior leaders have given good attention to improving pupils' attendance. Policies have been thoroughly reviewed so that expectations for attendance and punctuality are unambiguous. Administrative staff are now clear about their roles in following up absences. A good leaflet for parents and carers clearly sets out expectations for their children's attendance and the impact that absence has on academic progress. Whole-school and individual targets are now set and a good display publicly celebrates successes for each class. Attendance levels for the academic year so far show improvement from 88.3% last year to 91.8% from September to the end of January. In Year 7, attendance is above average at around

95%. The number of persistent absentees has significantly reduced, although the attendance level for Year 10 is still significantly affected by one individual.

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

- develop and implement strategies to manage consistently pupils' behaviour – satisfactory
- promote good attendance through the development and implementation of effective strategies – good.

The effectiveness of provision

There is still much to be done to improve the quality of teaching and thus accelerate pupils' progress. While no inadequate teaching was seen during this monitoring visit, the school's analysis shows that too many lessons over time are satisfactory and there remain pockets of inadequate teaching. The school is not yet on track to reach its April 2011 milestone target of 60% good teaching. Systematic lesson observations by the interim headteacher and, increasingly, by senior leaders show that less effective teaching continues to occur because work is not well enough matched to the learning needs of all pupils. Often, teachers' expectations of the pace and the conceptual level at which pupils can work are too low and, as a result, teaching fails to really engage or excite them.

As seen in when developing football skills in a physical education lesson and a lesson where pupils were designing invitations for a Valentine's Day party, pupils learn best when work is well matched to their learning needs, age and interests and teachers clearly know what they intend pupils to learn from their independent tasks. The interim headteacher and local authority are aware that the current curriculum is failing to engage pupils as it should and is limiting their potential. They have rightly identified that the establishment of a more creative curriculum which is carefully adjusted to meet pupils' specific special educational needs and which gives them a wider range of academic and vocational pathways is a matter of priority.

The interim headteacher has set clear expectations from the start that all staff will use the same lesson plan format. Staff development has taken place to help teachers better understand the meaning of a 'learning intention' and the importance of sharing this with pupils at the start of lessons. The planning format is now used by all teachers and some teaching assistants say that these plans are helping them to better understand how to support pupils' learning in class. A number feel that this has improved their role, although others still feel that their role is focused too heavily on managing behaviour rather than promoting learning.

Despite making overall satisfactory progress on the specific area for improvement relating to planning, teachers still do not give sufficient consideration in their plans to the individual learning needs of pupils, focusing rather on the level of support they require from adults. The limited availability of data, or data which are accurate,

hinders teachers from fully understanding the levels at which pupils are working and to set accurate targets for improvement. This hampers the quality of academic guidance available to pupils as teachers are not able to pinpoint for them what it is they need to do to improve their work and reach the next level or grade. Teachers and teaching assistants are sensitive to pupils' needs and there is sound intervention to support their personal and emotional development. Teaching assistants and administrative staff give good support in ensuring that all the pupils are treated fairly and cared for well. School council members value the help that they receive from teaching assistants and say that the peer mentor scheme works well in helping pupils to understand how to help others.

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

- ensure that teachers' planning clearly identifies the needs of pupils and how these will be met in every lesson – satisfactory
- make sure that feedback to pupils tells them what they need to do to improve their work and reach the next level or grade – inadequate.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The senior leadership of the school has been strengthened significantly since September with the appointment of the interim headteacher. She has brought to the school her substantial experience of effective leadership of a high quality provision and actively seeks professional advice from leaders in similar schools. She has correctly identified the school's strengths and weaknesses and is developing the skills of senior leaders sensitively but as quickly as possible. The senior leadership team's roles and responsibilities have been reviewed and reallocated to match school improvement needs. The team is not yet fully effective but is beginning to have an impact on improving pupils' progress through regular monitoring of teaching and learning. Robust performance management procedures for teachers have been established which are correctly linked to meeting core professional standards. As a result, teachers are becoming clearer about expectations and there is a much greater emphasis on accountability. Not all staff have found this easy to accept, resulting in one teacher being placed on full capability procedures and two teachers who are currently receiving management support.

The rigorous review and establishment of policies and procedures across all areas of the school's work has helped to establish clear expectations, improved the day-to-day running of the school and raised the morale of most staff. Parents and carers spoken to during the monitoring visit had nothing but praise for the changes brought about recently in the school. The new raising attainment plan is closely aligned with the school's long-term strategic plan and the local authority's action plan for the school's improvement. Key milestones, actions and targets are shared with all staff so that all know what the next steps are to work towards together.

The governing body, under its new chair, has made a good start in getting to grips with the issues within the school. The chair and governors, including those who are

new and highly experienced, are committed to the school's success and have a good grasp of what governing a school in special measures requires. They have taken important steps to ensure they are well informed about the data relating to the pupils' attendance as well as about the day-to-day workings of the school. Through regular meetings, discussions with the interim headteacher and visits to gain first-hand information, they are well placed to hold the school to account. However, they are currently hampered in developing this aspect of their role fully by the lack of reliable data on pupils' progress. Governors and senior leaders have ensured that safeguarding procedures continue to be satisfactory.

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

- implement the agreed interim management structure with clear roles and responsibilities being understood by the team – satisfactory
- establish rigorous and robust systems to monitor all aspects of provision – satisfactory
- improve governance through developing the management skills needed to hold the school to account – satisfactory.

External support

The action plan provided by the local authority has been improved and is now satisfactory. With the associated raising attainment plan, the action plan sets clearer milestone indicators for the short and medium term in order to track its progress to meet the overarching success criteria identified in the plan. There is greater clarity about which persons will monitor the implementation of the plan and who will evaluate the impact of actions taken on securing improvement. These will need to be reviewed as the school moves through its changing leadership over the next two terms. The local authority's date for the removal of special measures by April 2012 is achievable but highly dependent on it securing effective substantive leadership from September 2011.

Support is coordinated by the local authority's special educational needs inspector, who is also the school improvement partner and visits the school regularly. The local authority contribution also includes specialist support for English and mathematics but the impact of this has yet to be fully demonstrated. Input from the Behaviour Support Team is beginning to have a good impact on pupils' outcomes.

Priorities for further improvement

- Establish a rigorous system for assessing pupils' learning and for tracking their progress so:
 - teachers clearly understand how well pupils are learning and plan lessons accurately in order to improve their individual progress
 - the school better understands the current curriculum's effectiveness in meeting pupils' individual needs.