

Tribal
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** 0117 315 0430
www.ofsted.gov.uk **Direct email:** stephen.godden@tribalgroup.com

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Ms J Stogdon
Headteacher
The Michael Tippett School
Heron Road
London
SE24 0HZ

Dear Ms Stogdon

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools: monitoring inspection of The Michael Tippett School

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 15 February 2011, for the time you gave to our telephone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during the inspection. Please pass on my thanks to the School Improvement Partner for finding the time to speak with me.

There has been an enforced change in school leadership since the previous inspection brought on by maternity leave, which began in January 2011. The duties and responsibilities of the assistant headteacher are being shared on a temporary basis by a senior teacher and a newly promoted teacher. The number of pupils on roll remains broadly the same as that when the school was last inspected.

As a result of the inspection on 9 and 10 February 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.

School leaders adopted a very methodical and systematic approach to addressing the priority areas for improvement. They quickly produced effective action plans for each, and these have been instrumental in driving forward change. The strength of the action plans lies in the way that they are formulated, particularly in relation to leaders' precise articulation of the outcomes that they wished to attain for each development point. By identifying the milestones and checkpoints that the school would need to achieve in order to meet these longer-term goals successfully, leaders have been in a strong position to routinely monitor and evaluate the rate and extent

of development. The school has been supported well by the governing body and the local authority through the input of its school adviser, School Improvement Partner and other colleagues. These partners worked very closely with school leaders and they added a critical and challenging external edge to the school's own analysis and evaluation of how well it was progressing.

The school's wide-ranging review of its policies and procedures for the curriculum, teaching and learning, and assessment was fundamental to its development. Staff implement the new arrangements well. Lessons are planned precisely and students' small gains in learning are recorded accurately. Although students' attainment is low because of the severe and profound nature of their learning difficulties, they make good progress. Leaders and managers at all levels use this assessment information effectively to evaluate students' achievements over time and to plot future learning against challenging targets. Leaders and managers understand and carry out their roles well in this respect, as in other aspects of their responsibilities, because a programme of ongoing professional development has given them the skills and confidence to do so. Consequently, they are much better equipped to participate fully in the routine monitoring and evaluation of all features of the school's provision and the impact that they have on improving outcomes for students. This work has been given added impetus by the appointment of staff with particular responsibility for determining ways to better evaluate students' progress in areas such as communication and the self-management of behaviours. This collective approach pays dividends. The outcomes of regular audits are collected and collated into a comprehensive database that indicates all elements of provision that benefit students, either in school or through partner agencies, such as therapists. Senior leaders, therefore, have a detailed profile of provision and outcomes for each student, and they are beginning to use this information effectively in, for example, developing transition programmes in preparation for students leaving school.

Improved self-evaluation procedures give leaders ready access to key indicators of the effectiveness of all elements of whole-school provision. This includes information about how well its promotion of community cohesion enables students to develop awareness of communities beyond their immediate circle of contacts. The school knows its students and their families very well, and diversity is celebrated in many ways within school. Curriculum modules, such as 'Living in Lambeth' and 'Words in Our World' help students to develop a sense of communities outside their day-to-day experiences. The recent establishment of a link with a Brazilian special school puts the school in a good position to further broaden their horizons.

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

Mike Kell
Additional Inspector

Annex

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

- Improve pupils' achievement by:
 - using its 'small steps' data about the learning of each pupil more effectively to show more clearly their progress
 - ensuring that teachers' planning clearly identifies individual pupils' needs and how these will be met.
- Establish more effective links between the systems for monitoring and evaluating separate aspects of the provision so that a clear picture of each individual's performance, as well as that of the school as a whole, can be demonstrated.
- Ensure that all leaders and managers are clear about their roles and responsibilities in moving the school forward.
- Ensure that the school promotes community cohesion more effectively so that pupils have a better understanding about the lives of others by:
 - finalising its audit of provision
 - developing the national and international aspects of its work.