

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](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk) **Direct email:** sarah.cartlidge@tribalgroup.com

4 March 2011

Mr J Robinson  
The Headteacher  
The Misbourne School  
Misbourne Drive  
Great Missenden  
Buckinghamshire  
HP16 0BN

Dear Mr Robinson

### **Special measures: monitoring inspection of The Misbourne School**

Following my visit with Martin Marsh and Joan Lindsay, Additional Inspectors, to your school on 2 and 3 March 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 – inadequate.

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 and the Director of Children's Services for Buckinghamshire.

Yours sincerely

Emma Ing  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Annex**

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

- Raise attainment, particularly in the core subjects of English and mathematics, by:
  - ensuring that all teachers use assessment information to plan carefully for the needs of all learners
  - planning and implementing effective strategies for students who have fallen behind in their learning
  - ensuring that all staff have the highest expectations of what students can achieve.
- Ensure that leaders and managers at all levels have a clear and shared understanding of how to take the school forward by:
  - clarifying everyone's roles and responsibilities
  - making self-evaluation procedures more rigorous
  - evaluating the impact of initiatives on different groups of students.

## **Special measures: monitoring of The Misbourne School**

### **Report from the first monitoring inspection on 2 and 3 March 2011**

#### **Evidence**

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, a representative from the local authority, several different groups of staff and senior leaders, four different groups of students, the chair of the interim executive board and the consultant headteacher. In addition, they talked informally to students during lessons and break times. Inspectors did not consider the quality of education provided in the sixth form on this visit.

#### **Context**

Since the Ofsted inspection in September 2010 the local authority has appointed an interim executive board. There have been no other significant changes to the context of the school.

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

Year 11 students have begun to understand that they are in danger of underachieving. Students in this year group greatly value the high-quality teaching that is offered through after-school and in-school catch-up sessions and make great efforts to get to these and use the time well. They feel very well supported by their head of year. Forecasts indicate that students in this year group are making better progress in English and mathematics. Attainment this year is on track to be better than last year. The improvements in the progress made by Year 11 students in English and mathematics are a result of interventions and the focused work with this year group. The progress students generally make in lessons and homework, however, has not improved and other year groups are not yet being supported to catch up with their learning.

Students present their work well in art and technology, but in English, mathematics, and humanities presentation is poor and reflects the low value placed on students' work by themselves and their teachers. The progress students make in these subjects is patchy and attainment is not being raised. In science the progress made by students is slowing and students are falling well behind.

School leaders have begun to introduce the use of assessment to support learning. As a result, students generally know what levels they are working at and what they are working towards. However, they do not always trust these levels and some feel that they are the result of guesswork on the part of staff. Students commented to inspectors, that their levels and targets change too often to be credible. They are also unclear about what they need to do to improve their work and reach their target levels in most subjects.

Progress since the last section 5 inspection:

- raise attainment particularly in the core subjects of English and mathematics – inadequate.

### **Other relevant pupil outcomes**

Students remain highly motivated, courteous and thoughtful. They want to be proud of their school and many expressed their sadness that the school is not as good as it should be. They know and understand which aspects of the school that work well and what is working less well. They express a readiness to work with their teachers to improve the quality of education that the school provides. Older students do not feel that they have a voice or that senior leaders communicate well with them, for example by sharing expectations and the rationale behind them. As a result, they express feelings of disaffection and alienation.

Students say that they feel safe, but they also comment that there is bullying. Younger students commented that they are picked on if they do not conform to a norm and that students are taunted about their appearance and attitudes.

Although students demonstrate responsible attitudes in discussion, in lessons behaviour ranges from good to inadequate. Inevitably, when the pace of lessons slows, or students are not challenged, the attention of individuals and groups wanders. The progress that students make is too often held back by poor behaviour and too many teachers are shouting to try and assert control.

Attendance remains just above national averages; however, there has been an increase of persistent absentees.

### **The effectiveness of provision**

The recently introduced tracking systems are now fit for purpose and are accessible for all teachers and middle leaders. School leaders have begun to introduce assessment profiles to help teachers plan lessons pitched at individual learners. However, teachers are not yet held to account for students' lack of progress, partly because tracking data have not yet been in place long enough to yield enough information on attainment and progress. The tracking systems are not yet efficient enough to identify quickly where interventions are needed, nor to monitor their impact and make any appropriate adjustments.

While there is some outstanding practice and good teaching, there is now too much inadequate teaching. In addition, too many classes are split between teachers and fluctuations in staffing are leading to the use of short-term teachers who do not have the opportunity to build relationships with their classes. These factors are inhibiting students' learning. Most teachers know their subjects well and the school's specialist subjects are consistently well taught. In other subject areas the picture is mixed, but there are pockets of good and excellent practice throughout the school.

Lessons generally take too long to start and the pace within them is often slow. There are teachers who identify good learning objectives and focus the lesson tightly around these, offering a good range of activities that support progression in students' learning. Most teachers, however, plan for one learning objective at three levels and make little reference to the objective through the lesson. Teachers do not use their own ongoing assessment of students' understanding and skill levels to plan each lesson to meet students' individual needs. Nor do they consistently assess during the lessons how well students understand the concepts being taught in order to adjust the next steps of the lesson to challenge thinking or go over the learning as appropriate. Many teachers use questioning well to help students develop their understanding, but this is often confined to just a pair of students at a time. The marking of students' work and the quality of feedback given are extremely inconsistent. There is some outstanding practice but most fails to support learning by identifying the level reached and the next steps needed to secure improvement.

School leaders have begun to develop strategies for managing behaviour and have recently introduced an inclusion room, designed to enable students whose behaviour is disrupting others a place where they can be supported with their learning. The impact of this is not yet evident. In general, behaviour management strategies are applied inconsistently and students therefore do not take the punishments seriously. Different groups of students expressed concern that teachers are not always fair in the way they treat everybody. Some students commented that it takes a lot of effort to get teachers to respond to incidents of bullying. The provision for students with special educational needs is weak.

The curriculum appears to meet the needs of students and offer appropriate pathways. However, school leaders have not yet evaluated its impact on students' progress.

There is good practice within the school's specialist subjects, but the leadership responsibility of this area of the school's work is unclear and, whilst there is capacity in the art and technology departments to drive improvement across the school, nothing has been done in respect of this.

Progress since the last section 5 inspection:

- ensure all teachers use assessment information to plan carefully for the needs of all learners – inadequate
- plan and implement effective strategies for pupils who are falling behind in their learning – inadequate
- ensure that all staff have the highest expectation of what students can achieve – inadequate.

### **The effectiveness of leadership and management**

The leadership and management of the school remain inadequate. The senior leadership team is not taking a firm, well-thought-out stance about what needs to be achieved and how the school will achieve it. There is insufficient leadership and

support of individual members of the team to enable them to take an effective strategic role.

Many individual staff in the school are making decisions and taking innovative and appropriate steps designed to secure improvement. These individual staff are committed to the school and demonstrate an understanding of what needs to be done. However, nearly all the actions taken are at an operational rather than strategic level and they are not driven centrally or as part of a coherent plan. As a consequence their impact is severely limited. There remains confusion about the responsibilities held by individual staff and the restructuring process is still not complete.

The interim executive board, the local authority and the consultant headteacher are all trying to help. The solutions each offer have the potential for success, but their messages are perceived by the headteacher as conflicting. He is not acting decisively or with sufficient urgency. There are plans for improvement, but these are not owned or well understood by members of the senior leadership team or the staff as a whole. There are no effective systems for monitoring the impact of school's work against its targets and success criteria.

Progress since the last section 5 inspection:

- ensure that leaders and managers at all levels have a clear and shared understanding of how to take the school forward – inadequate
- clarify everyone's roles and responsibilities – inadequate
- make self-evaluation processes more rigorous – inadequate.

### **External support**

The local authority has a robust and generally accurate picture of the quality of leadership of the school and the provision that is offered. It has set up a highly qualified and experienced interim executive board. It has also secured the services of a capable and passionate consultant headteacher to support the senior leadership of the school. However, systems for holding the senior leadership of the school to account have not been effective in securing improvement. Difficulties have been exacerbated by a lack of clarity and agreement between all parties about the different roles of the interim executive board, the consultant headteacher and the school's headteacher. The authority's statement of action is not yet fit for purpose as it lacks:

- information about the scope for the school to be closed or federated, or to become a trust school or an academy, with an analysis of surplus places in better performing schools
- measurable milestones and sufficient detailed information about the steps to be taken to bring about improvement.

On a more immediate level, local authority consultants have supported the school well.

## **Priorities for further improvement**

- Galvanise the whole school community and external support around a shared understanding of what needs to be done and clearly identify the different responsibilities individuals and groups are to take in achieving this.
- Set up effective systems to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the senior leadership team and the school's progress towards its targets focusing on the impact of actions on outcomes for students.