

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

10 March 2011

Ms Kirsty McIlhargey
Acting headteacher
The Lindfield School
Lindfield Road
Eastbourne
East Sussex
BN22 0BQ

Dear Ms McIlhargey

Notice to improve: monitoring inspection of The Lindfield School

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 9 March 2011 and for the information which you provided during the inspection. Please pass on my thanks to the governors, local authority representative and to all of the students who made the visit so valuable.

There have been some changes in the leadership since the last inspection, and the governing body is appropriately considering the longer-term leadership arrangements of the school.

As a result of the inspection on 22 June 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 is making good progress in addressing the issues for improvement and in raising the pupils' achievement.

The school has worked hard in developing systems for tracking and recording students' achievements more rigorously and more consistently. As a result, plans are more focused and learning is more effective. The analysis of tracking information and case studies shows that students are beginning to achieve more and are engaging in learning more effectively. The school is able to demonstrate increasing sophistication in the use of tracking information but is aware that there is still much to do to ensure that lessons can be refined to ensure more personalised learning opportunities for all students. The school now regularly monitors teaching and learning and has a very clear understanding of the many strengths of the teaching team. The headteacher also has a very sharp understanding of where practice is not as strong and requires rapid improvement.

The headteacher has brought staff together with a clear direction and established a team that is eager to improve all aspects of the school. Staff feel supported and are accountable and increasingly involved in the monitoring and analysis of the school's work. Teachers are increasingly looking at the curriculum and are identifying areas that can be linked to enhance learning and make topics more interesting. For example, in a science lesson the teacher made good use of visual aids and engaged students in discussions, with well-planned activities and good use of questioning.

At times, teaching assistants and teachers secure outstanding progress for students, with clear use of language and high expectations. They check students' understanding as lessons develop and adapt the tasks to individual needs to make sure all are challenged and enjoying the learning. During one lesson where students were looking at contraception, the teaching assistant encouraged students to discuss and understand the topic with her confident and accurate use of language and symbols and calm, deliberate approach. The prior knowledge of students is not yet, however, always considered, tested or used to plan individual learning journeys. The use of teaching assistants is not consistent, as demonstrated by the contrast between the outstanding contributions and the passive roles they have at times. Teachers' planning is clear but does not include a sharp enough focus at times for each individual student. Consequently, tasks can be engaging and completed enthusiastically but lack sufficient challenge for all students.

The school has made rapid progress in developing a wider use of signing, and students enjoy using their new skills in communication. During one signing lesson the learning in one group was infectious, with each member of the group encouraging others, testing and developing their new signing skills collaboratively. This, along with the recent accreditation for autism, is encouraging a more holistic approach to the curriculum.

The governing body has started to address the need to develop a more systematic approach to monitoring and challenging school practice. Statutory obligations are being fulfilled. The governing body has been supported by the local authority in getting systems and policies updated and ensuring members all understand the extent of their responsibilities and how they can best fulfil them. The governing body recognises that there is a great deal of work still to do to ensure that practice is questioned, systems are optimised and procedures are effective in producing the desired results. They have made great steps forward already, however, in this process.

The local authority statement of action is fit for purpose. They have supported the school well in a number of ways and the school has welcomed this support. A wide range of effective activities have assisted the school's development. These include the support for the governing body, the development of subject leadership and monitoring roles, and coaching for teaching and learning. The school is able to direct this support for itself.

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

Paul Scott

Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Develop and implement whole-school systems and processes for evaluating and monitoring all aspects of the school's work.
- Ensure that the governing body fulfils its statutory obligations and establishes a clear system of accountability, monitoring and allocation of resources in order to achieve improved value for money.
- Agree and implement a whole-school approach to planning for and evaluating students' progress in lessons.
- Consider and implement ways in which different subjects can be combined or taught in a way that makes learning more interesting and exciting for all.