

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** 0117 315 0430  
[www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk) **Direct email:** rebecca.jackson@tribalgroup.com

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Mr Colin Belford  
Headteacher  
Archway School  
Paganhill  
Stroud  
Gloucestershire  
GL5 4AX

Dear Mr Belford

### **Special measures: monitoring inspection of Archway School**

Following my visit with David Hogg and Ann Short, Additional Inspectors, to your school on 17 and 18 May 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 December 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 – satisfactory

Newly Qualified Teachers may be appointed subject to the following qualifications:

- Appointments are only made to the school's most effective departments, where strong support for professional development can be assured.
- The local authority supports the appointment.
- The HMI leading the monitoring inspections supports the appointment.

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 Gloucestershire.

Yours sincerely

Peter Sanderson  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## Annex

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

- Raise students' attainment in all subjects to meet or exceed national levels, both at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form.
- Improve the proportion of good or better teaching across the school by ensuring that:
  - monitoring and evaluation focus on the contribution that teaching makes to students' learning, and evaluate clearly the progress made by different groups of students
  - the resulting assessment information is used to plan work that is well matched to all students' individual needs
  - effective questioning and dialogue are used to stimulate students' active participation in all lessons, with more opportunities for students to contribute their ideas to drive the learning forward
  - marking is much more detailed and gives students clear advice so that they know how to improve their work.
- Improve the impact of leaders at all levels on raising achievement by:
  - assiduously monitoring and using assessment information on different student groups to ensure that learning opportunities fully meet their needs
  - ensuring that assessment information is accurate in all subjects so that staff are clear about the capabilities of each student
  - ensuring that teachers make the most of learning opportunities within their subjects to reinforce literacy and numeracy across the school.
- Ensure that the governing body holds all leaders and managers to account by:
  - receiving regular, accurate information on the performance of different groups of students
  - rigorously monitoring and evaluating the quality of provision for all students, especially boys and students with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

## **Special measures: monitoring of Archway School**

### **Report from the first monitoring inspection on 17 and 18 May 2011**

#### **Evidence**

Inspectors observed the school's work, including 28 lessons, conducted a learning walk with the headteacher briefly visiting 11 lessons, and scrutinised documents. They met with the headteacher, a range of staff, a representative group of students, the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Governing Body, two representatives from the local authority and a Local Leader of Education.

#### **Context**

The governing body has undergone significant change since the last inspection. Four governors have left the governing body and a new chair and vice-chair of governors have been appointed. Two experienced governors have been temporarily co-opted onto the governing body by the local authority. There are currently two staff governor vacancies.

During this inspection, Year 12 students were on study leave.

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

The progress made by students is improving. Inspectors observed that students make good progress in a higher percentage of lessons than was the case during the previous inspection. As a result, students' attainment is beginning to rise across the school. For example, Year 11 students who have already taken GCSE examinations in mathematics and science performed better than Year 11 students taking these examinations the previous year. The percentage of students on track to attain five or more A\* to C grades including English and mathematics has also increased since the previous inspection. However, attainment against this measure remains too low and below where it should be, given the attainment of students on entry to the school. The gaps in achievement between boys and girls and between students with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their peers are beginning to close. However, the achievement of boys and of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities remains too low.

The accuracy of teachers' assessments is beginning to improve due to more rigorous monitoring by heads of department. However, the accuracy of Year 12 assessments is less secure than in other year groups. The systems to track the progress of students in the main school and in the sixth form have improved since the last inspection, with the achievement of different groups of students more effectively analysed. Sixth form tracking data indicates that attainment in Years 12 and 13 is beginning to rise. However, students are not yet making the progress that they

should and too many Year 12 students failed to achieve a pass grade in AS examinations taken in January.

### Judgement

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

- Raise students' attainment in all subjects to meet or exceed national levels, both at Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form– satisfactory.

### **Other relevant pupil outcomes**

As was the case during the previous inspection, there continues to be a welcoming, friendly atmosphere in the school. Students report that they enjoy school and that they feel safe. Students behaved well in the large majority of lessons seen and they behaved sensibly around the school site. The school continues to place a high priority on good attendance. The improving trend of attendance of students in Years 7 to 11 has continued. There has been a greater focus on improving sixth form attendance since the previous inspection. Students welcome the rewards now being given to those who attend regularly. Although sixth form students with low attendance are challenged to improve their attendance, both staff and students recognise this could be done with a greater degree of rigour. As a result, sixth form attendance has only slightly improved since the previous inspection and this remains an important area of focus for the school.

### **The effectiveness of provision**

The quality of teaching is improving. Inspectors observed a higher percentage of lessons in which teaching was good or better than was the case during the previous inspection. The percentage of lessons in which teaching is inadequate has also declined. However, teaching is not yet consistently good enough across the school to ensure that students make enough progress to catch up the ground lost during their earlier years at the school. Improvements have been driven by some robust monitoring of teaching, with effective use being made of external consultants to support senior leaders. The monitoring of teaching now has a clearer focus on the contribution teaching makes to learning. The skills of stronger teachers in the school have been effectively harnessed to support staff whose practice is in need of improvement.

Teachers' lesson planning places a greater and more appropriate focus on the use of learning objectives. These are pitched at different levels to meet the needs of all students. However, lesson planning does not consistently identify the strategies that will be used in lessons to challenge the most able and to support lower attaining students to achieve these objectives. Teachers have good subject knowledge and provide clear, helpful explanations to students that aid their learning. These explanations are often supported by the use of well-prepared digital presentations.

However, at times, teachers talk for too long and do too much work for students. When teachers do give them the opportunity to be actively involved in their learning, students respond positively and willingly becoming involved in the activities arranged for them. As sixth form students rightly identified, teachers need to provide more opportunities for students to develop their independent learning skills both in the main school and in the sixth form. The quality of teachers' questioning has improved since the last inspection, with some teachers using questioning not only to check students' knowledge but to delve deeper to explore and develop their understanding of new ideas and concepts. However, this good practice is not consistently in place across the school. Strong, positive relationships between teachers and students and the impact of this on students' good behaviour were positive features of the large majority of the lessons observed.

Books observed during this inspection had been marked more regularly. The quality of feedback to students on how to improve their work has improved. In some cases, the use of formative 'how to improve' comments provided clear and helpful advice to students. However, this good practice is not consistent across the school with some books marked with no comments or simply ones that were congratulatory, giving no advice for improvement.

Staff now have a better understanding of the specific learning needs of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities in their class through data and information provided to them. The strategies used to support the learning of these students have improved due to some effective training. However, inconsistencies in practice remain. For example, inspectors observed teaching assistants providing good support to students in some lessons but their skills were under-utilised in others because they had not been given clear guidance by teachers. A system to more clearly track the progress of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities has been introduced since the previous inspection. However, this system is new and it is not possible for staff to evaluate the effectiveness of the interventions used to improve the progress made by these students.

Some good changes made to the Key Stage 4 curriculum in recent years have meant that it is now more tailored to students' needs. Tracking data indicates that some of these changes will have a positive impact on Year 11 students' attainment this year. Some further sensible changes are planned for next year. The impact of changes to the Key Stage 3 curriculum to introduce a more skills-based approach is less evident. These skills are still not being consistently referred to by teachers in lessons and so their impact on students' achievement is limited.

### Judgement

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

- Improve the proportion of good or better teaching across the school – satisfactory.

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

Senior and middle leaders recognise that in the past, monitoring lacked sufficient rigour to ensure consistency of practice across the school. Since the last inspection, the headteacher, with the support of senior leaders, has effectively begun to address this issue. They are establishing a greater culture of accountability within the school. The responsibilities of middle leaders for driving improvement have been made clearer and they are being increasingly held to account for students' progress and attainment through more effective line management meetings. Improvements made to the systems to track students progress both in the main school and in the sixth form enable these meetings to have a greater focus on the progress made by groups of students. Frequent assessment points, particularly in Years 10 and 11, also enable senior and middle leaders to identify underachievement at an early stage and intervene. For example, a range of subject-based interventions, such as revision and booster sessions, are in place. These actions are beginning to have a positive impact on raising achievement. Middle leaders are committed to improving outcomes for students and they welcome these new structures. However, there is some inconsistency in the effectiveness of middle leaders to monitor provision and students' outcomes in their subjects and take effective action to raise attainment. This is evident in the variation in achievement between different subjects.

The school's raising achievement plan has a clear focus on the areas for improvement identified by the previous inspection. The plan addresses these issues well, with clear success criteria and monitoring and evaluation procedures identified.

Following the previous inspection, there was an audit of the governing body's strengths and areas in need of development. Training has been provided to members to address areas of weakness, particularly in relation to the analysis of assessment information. The governing body has been strengthened by the addition of two local authority co-opted governors. Members are now clearer about their roles and reorganisation of their committee structure has enabled a clearer focus on monitoring the impact of school improvement initiatives. The governing body is now being better informed about performance of different groups of students and the quality of provision in the school. As a result, it is beginning to provide an appropriate level of challenge to the school's senior leadership team.

### *Judgement*

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

- Improve the impact of leaders at all levels on raising achievement – satisfactory.
- Ensure that the governing body holds all leaders and managers to account – satisfactory.

## **External support**

The local authority's statement of action meets requirements. It addresses the issues raised by the previous inspection well and it is closely linked to the school's raising achievement plan. The school and the local authority are working together well to improve provision and student outcomes. The 'project group', which has both local authority and school representation, monitors and evaluates well the impact of actions being taken. The local authority has commissioned some effective external support for teaching and learning. It has also provided some good support for governance.