

Tribal
1-4 Portland Square
Bristol BS2 8RR

T 0300 123 1231

Text Phone: 0161 6188524 **Direct T** 0117 3115319

enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk **Direct F** 0117 3150430

www.ofsted.gov.uk

Direct email: matthew.parker@tribalgroup.com

30 June 2011

Mrs Hilary Harris, Executive headteacher
Mr Richard Berry, Acting headteacher
Bristol Gateway School
Long Cross
Bristol
BS11 0QA

Dear Mrs Harris and Mr Berry

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Bristol Gateway School

Following my visit to your school on 28 and 29 June 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 January 2011. 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 – 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 Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Bristol.

Yours sincerely

Heather Yaxley
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in January 2011

- Urgently improve the quality of pupils' learning, progress and attendance.

- Improve the quality of teaching by ensuring that teachers:
 - have sufficient subject knowledge
 - tailor work to the individual needs of pupils
 - apply consistent behaviour management and deploy additional adults effectively.

- Improve the quality of the curriculum so that there is sufficient coverage and progression in all subjects.

- Improve leadership and management by:
 - reviewing the current structure and clarifying the roles and responsibilities of leaders, including governors
 - providing appropriate professional development so that all leaders play a full part in accurately monitoring the school's performance and driving improvement.

Special measures: monitoring of Bristol Gateway School

Report from the first monitoring inspection on 28–29 June 2011

Evidence

The inspector observed the school's work and scrutinised documents. Meetings were held with senior leaders, the Chair of the Governing Body and the School Improvement Partner. The inspector also attended the school council's weekly meeting.

Context

At the time of the previous inspection, the school was led by an executive headteacher on a part-time basis. This is still the case and, in addition, an acting headteacher is seconded from a local secondary school on a full-time basis. This arrangement is in place for the next academic year. The possibility of establishing formal links with the local primary school for pupils with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties is being explored.

The senior leadership team has been restructured and now comprises two assistant headteachers, a leader for each of Key Stages 3 and 4, and a special educational needs coordinator. Vacancies currently exist for four teachers and four learning support assistants. Five staff are on long-term absence.

The local authority removed financial responsibilities from the governing body shortly after the January 2011 inspection. Membership of the governing body has been extended with the appointment of three additional governors and a link governor from the local primary school for pupils with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. The school has a new School Improvement Partner, who is also the local authority school improvement officer.

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

There has been no improvement in students' achievements and progress since the January 2011 inspection. Lesson observations and the school's information show that students of all ages made inadequate progress in their learning during this academic year. Attainments in English, mathematics and science remain low and targets set are not challenging enough. Rates of attendance are too low for too many students and have not improved since the January inspection. Attendance is tracked thoroughly but as yet the information is not used sufficiently well to make a difference and the overall target is too low. Nevertheless, attendance now has a much higher profile in school generally and with individual students. Having looked more closely at the attendance of the significant proportion of students educated

off-site, the school now has a clear picture of their whereabouts on each day and how often they receive education.

Some students, particularly older ones, show respect, enjoy their learning and attend appropriately to the work. The overall picture is a mixed one. Too many students are excluded on too many occasions. Periods of fixed-term exclusion increased significantly following the January inspection, although there are early signs of a decrease over the past few months. However, the number of recorded incidents of inappropriate behaviour has steadily reduced each month and decreased dramatically over the year, including the incidence of physical aggression. Lower-level, yet highly disruptive behaviour, occurs too frequently and swearing is commonplace in class and around school. Nevertheless, it is now unusual for students to be out of class and when they are, staff support them well to return to their learning quickly. Behaviour in class is linked closely with the quality of teaching.

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

- Urgently improve the quality of pupils' learning, progress and attendance – inadequate.

The effectiveness of provision

The quality of teaching has not improved since the January inspection and too much remains inadequate. Interactions between staff and students are often relaxed and light-hearted but not necessarily founded on students' respect towards adults or their motivation to learn. Students often try to control what is happening, particularly in lessons, and adults do not always manage this appropriately. Adults often give students too many opportunities to change their behaviour rather than sticking to agreed and acceptable boundaries. This not only reinforces poor behaviour but also wastes learning time. Other weaknesses include a lack of direction for support staff to make a sufficient contribution to students' learning and insufficient planning for students' individual learning needs. This is linked to, but not exclusively a result of, high levels of staff absence, with a significant proportion of lessons covered by supply staff. When students do as well as they should in lessons it is because the focus is on the learning of each individual student, the right behaviours are rewarded and inappropriate behaviour is sensitively yet explicitly tackled. This was seen in an English lesson where students were helped to practise what they had learned independently and at their own level, with clear and timely guidance on maintaining appropriate behaviour. In another lesson, Year 11 students were supported well in exploring how to help one another improve their communication skills by giving honest, sensitive and constructive suggestions.

It is acknowledged by staff and students that the current system for rewarding behaviour is not working well. The students do not value it sufficiently, staff do not use it consistently and it does not have a high enough profile. As a result, the points

that students accumulate are not a true reflection of their attitudes and behaviour or motivate them sufficiently to make improvements. This is a current area of development.

Although there is still much room for improvement, immediate action taken to improve the curriculum has established an appropriate direction and ethos to improve students' opportunities for learning. Tutor periods have been shortened and staff are expected to provide a specific focus for the sessions. The number of lessons allocated to English, mathematics and science has increased and more accreditation is now offered in Key Stage 4. Afternoon activities and clubs have mostly been replaced, giving more opportunities to teach the National Curriculum. However, the school day is too short to ensure that students have their entitlement to a quality curriculum. Plans are well advanced to make further changes in September.

Most students have taxi transport. In the mornings, most taxis arrive in time for students to start lessons promptly. At the end of the day, the arrangements do not work well because taxis do not arrive in time to support a smooth and prompt end to the day.

There are significant inadequacies in relation to the school building and site. The school occupies the corner of a large site with boarded-up ex-educational premises. These buildings are derelict and vandalised. Some parts of the Gateway building are in need of repair and redecoration and this, together with the poor state of the site, means that students do not have the aspirational and welcoming educational environment to which they are entitled. The Chair of the Governing Body is actively pursuing these issues on behalf of the students.

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

- Improve the quality of teaching – inadequate.
- Improve the quality of the curriculum so that there is sufficient coverage and progression in all subjects – satisfactory.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The executive and acting headteachers have brought much-needed stability and order to the school. A new staffing structure is in place and is now one that the school can afford. Revised job descriptions mean that accountabilities and responsibilities are clear. A range of systems and procedures for assessment, lesson plans, coverage of the curriculum and behaviour management is already established. The right things are now in place but are not yet embedded into practice and have not yet had sufficient time to make a difference to students' achievements. The monitoring of their effectiveness is also at an early stage, including the formal observation of teaching and learning. However, senior staff and members of the

governing body are starting to benefit from opportunities in other schools to observe and discuss good practice.

Restructuring of the senior team has brought new roles and responsibilities and higher expectations for their work. The structure supports the school's current priorities appropriately. With support from the local authority and with the appointment of four new, experienced members, the work of the governing body has improved. Governors are more proactive and have a better understanding of their roles and responsibilities. Their school improvement committee was established recently to monitor progress through the areas identified for improvement and to feed their findings into the local authority's monitoring group. Improvement plans are not always clearly focused on the difference that actions will make to outcomes for the students or how developments in one area are linked to another; for example, how the work of the special educational needs coordinator, assessment leader and the leader for behaviour and attendance complement one another. Similarly, it is not clear how actions on the governors' plan are to be evaluated alongside the success criteria in the whole-school action plan.

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

- Improve leadership and management by – satisfactory.

External support

The local authority's statement of action for the school was evaluated and judged by Ofsted as requiring amendments. A revised plan is in place and is fit for purpose, with timelines and success criteria sufficiently clear and appropriate support identified. A new plan is to be devised to cover the next academic year. Following the January 2011 inspection, the local authority moved swiftly and with a great sense of urgency to identify the full extent of the school's weaknesses and to secure leadership. Planned interviews for a new headteacher were cancelled and formal intervention powers were used to remove financial delegation. The local authority also supported the governing body in appointing additional governors and has recently appointed a local headteacher in the role of parents' champion to canvass the views of parents and carers. A school support group is established and includes consultants and an advanced skills teacher who are working with staff. The progress review group has already met on two occasions to track the school's progress. The Chair of the Governing Body and the two headteachers are very complimentary about the support that they have received from the local authority.

Priorities for further improvement

No additional priorities are identified at this time.