

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:** rebecca.jackson@tribalgroup.com

10 February 2012

Ms Elizabeth Caldwell
The Interim Headteacher
New Road School and Nursery Unit
Bryant Street
Chatham
Kent
ME4 5QN

Dear Ms Caldwell

Special measures: monitoring inspection of New Road School and Nursery Unit

Following my visit with Carmen Rodney HMI and Teresa Davies, Additional Inspector, to your school on 8 and 9 February 2012, 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 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 – satisfactory.

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 Medway.

Yours sincerely

Melanie Knowles
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Improve the leadership and management of the school by:
 - ensuring that senior leaders provide relevant and timely information to the governing body so that governors are better prepared to challenge and interrogate performance, and so make informed decisions
 - making sure that middle managers are proactive and rigorous in their roles, have a clear focus on pupils' progress and are held more to account by senior leaders
 - ensuring that the senior team maintains an overview of all that happens in the school and a much sharper insight into pupils' learning and progress.
- Enhance the rate of pupils' progress, especially in Key Stage 1 in reading, writing and mathematics by:
 - improving the systems for tracking pupils' learning so that underachieving individuals and groups are identified quickly
 - intervening promptly to support pupils who are falling behind in order to raise attainment.
- Raise the quality of teaching to 75% good or better by July 2012 by:
 - providing a pace of teaching that is rapid enough to secure a good pace of learning for pupils in each class
 - making sure that teachers use assessment information effectively to pitch work at the right level to challenge all pupils in their class
 - improving the consistency of good marking and use of targets in order to ensure that all learners know how they can improve.

Special measures: monitoring of New Road School and Nursery Unit

Report from the first monitoring inspection on 8 and 9 February 2012

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the interim headteacher, members of staff, a group of parents and carers, two representatives of the interim executive board, a representative from the local authority and a group of pupils from Key Stage 2.

Context

There have been significant changes in the leadership and management of the school since the last section 5 inspection. The previous headteacher took early retirement at the end of October and the local authority appointed an interim headteacher to replace her. The governing body was removed and replaced by an interim executive board that had its first meeting in December 2011.

Achievement of pupils at the school

Teachers have a much improved understanding of how well their pupils achieve. They are no longer reliant on one-off tests to judge attainment and assess pupils' progress over time by considering work in books and progress in lessons. Regular meetings to compare examples of pupils' work and share judgements with colleagues ensure that assessments in writing and mathematics are accurate. This means that school leaders can be more confident about the accuracy of internal tracking data in these subjects. Latest assessments indicate that there are still some anomalies in progress data for reading. Senior leaders are planning further support for teachers to improve assessment in this subject. Regular meetings to discuss each pupil's achievement are being introduced in the next half term. These will ensure that any underachievement is spotted and dealt with quickly.

Information gained from assessments this term shows that a higher proportion of pupils made good progress in reading, writing and mathematics in Key Stage 1. Work in books confirms that progress is improving across the school, although there is some variability between classes and subjects. Attainment in writing remains low. Outcomes in this area were particularly low for pupils at the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage in 2011. Currently, there are insufficient opportunities for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage to develop their writing skills. The school has a focus on improving achievement in writing and the two subject leaders have ideas to raise the profile of writing across the school. The teaching of sounds and letters has been reviewed and provision in Key Stage 1 is generally good.

Progress for disabled pupils, those who have special educational needs, and those learning English as an additional language is variable. Pupils with speech and language difficulties are well supported and early intervention enables many pupils

to quickly make up lost ground. Other pupils receive additional support in lessons, but the work set for them is not always pitched at the right level. They sometimes struggle to complete it, even with support. Teachers tend to rely on teaching assistants to support these pupils in lessons and some do not have the skills to do this effectively.

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

- enhance the rate of pupils' progress, especially in Key Stage 1 in reading, writing and mathematics – satisfactory.

The quality of teaching

Since the previous inspection, there has been an increased focus on developing teachers' skills in relation to using assessment and tracking pupils' progress accurately. This leads to more lessons being at least satisfactory. Good practice has been disseminated internally and through teachers having the opportunity to work closely with partner schools. The focus on identifying developmental points after observation increases teachers' understanding of which areas of their practice still require further work. The school recognises that there is still much more to do to ensure that a large majority of the teaching is consistently good or better.

In the most effective lessons seen during the inspection, time was used well and pupils made good progress based on the carefully planned activities and clear aims that were linked to a range of resources. This approach ensured that all pupils could achieve well regardless of their starting points. Energetic teaching and high expectations led to pupils making better progress than expected. This was possible because the teachers used very clear demonstrations to identify what pupils should aim to achieve. The clear sense of purpose and direction resulted in pupils working quickly and efficiently as they applied the taught skills. Practical tasks were used effectively to consolidate skills. Teachers used questioning effectively and encouraged pupils to develop their communication skills by working with a talk partner, discussing ideas and giving feedback to each other. In these lessons, teachers skilfully used whole-class teaching and group work to increase independent learning and pupils' understanding of how well the pupils had achieved. Teaching assistants were used very well to work alongside pupils and mirror the teacher's work. This helped those requiring additional support to make similar progress to their peers.

In contrast, satisfactory teaching did not make enough demands on pupils to use talk to develop their ideas. The pace was slower and expectations were not explicitly stated. Tasks were not pitched at appropriate levels to enable all pupils to make good progress in lessons. Pupils therefore did not strive to give their best and teaching assistants were at times not used effectively to provide the maximum support possible. In the very few inadequate lessons, teaching lacked clarity and expectations of what pupils could achieve were inappropriate. Learning was compromised because resources were not used well. Good intentions to make the

lesson fun for the pupils were unfulfilled because the activities were not pitched at the right level.

The quality of marking is generally good in most classes. Pupils are given clear pointers for improvement and self-assessment is encouraged, but there is not a consistent approach to correcting weaknesses in sentence structure, basic grammar, spelling and punctuation, particularly in Key Stage 2. In addition, weaknesses in presentation skills and handwriting are not sufficiently emphasised, so that pupils can develop pride in their work.

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

- raise the quality of teaching to 75% good or better by July 2012 – satisfactory.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Behaviour in and around the school is generally good. In lessons, the quality of behaviour is linked closely to the quality of teaching. Where the teaching is good, and engages pupils well, pupils display a zest for learning and attitudes are positive. Observations of lessons during the monitoring visit showed that pupils in some classes become disengaged when teaching does not stimulate them. On these occasions, behaviour is satisfactory because low-level chatter and pupils' lack of focus on their work, however brief, affects progress. Teachers are not always consistent in the way that they manage behaviour, particularly when younger pupils shout out answers to the teachers' questions. Overall, attendance is above average for most groups of pupils. The school is aware that there are some groups of pupils who do not attend regularly and is tracking their attendance carefully. The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils are secure.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

Since her appointment in November, the interim headteacher has acted quickly to accelerate the drive for improvement by drawing up a well-structured development plan. She has already been able to demonstrate the impact of her work in improving assessment. Teachers speak of a significant change in the culture of the school and of feeling more empowered. All teachers have received training to improve their skills in assessment and some have had additional, more tailored support from local authority officers. Most teachers have had the opportunity to visit other schools and observe good and outstanding practice.

Self-evaluation is accurate and senior leaders have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. They understand the pace of change that is required and appreciate that the school still faces considerable challenges as it moves towards a staffing restructure in September. The capacity of middle leaders to make a full contribution to the school's improvement is still limited, although leaders have a clearer understanding of their roles and accountability and are keen to develop their skills. Support for them is ongoing.

The recently constituted interim executive board has quickly built a good working relationship with the interim headteacher. She provides the members of the board with summaries of school tracking data and detailed analysis of pupils' progress so that they are well informed. Board members are developing their role in challenging and holding the school to account and have requested reports from key subject leaders for their next meeting. They plan to visit classrooms to see for themselves how improvement priorities are progressing.

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

- improve the leadership and management of the school – satisfactory.

External support

Senior leaders and school staff have welcomed a range of support provided by the local authority. Senior advisers have begun to monitor the school's progress against the statement of action and are tailoring advice and support to meet the school's needs. The local authority's statement of action fully meets requirements.