

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

Mr Mark Lunn
The Headteacher
Wellsprings Primary School
Crowcombe Road
Taunton
Somerset
TA2 7NF

Dear Mr Lunn

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Wellsprings Primary School

Following my visit 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 second monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in March 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 – good.

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – good.

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 Somerset.

Yours sincerely

Ian Hodgkinson
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- By Summer 2012 raise attainment and achievement of all pupils and especially in English and for more able pupils.
- Increase the proportion of good and better teaching and learning by:
 - ensuring that teachers' assessments are used to set clear learning objectives which meet the needs of all pupils, especially the more able
 - monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning with much greater emphasis on the progress made by pupils in different year groups and of different abilities.
- Make effective use of the tracking data and assessments of pupils' progress to:
 - set challenging targets to increase pupils' achievement in reading, writing and mathematics
 - set clear measurable success criteria for the school's development plans
 - close gaps in children's knowledge and understanding of communication, language and literacy in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Special measures: monitoring of Wellsprings Primary School

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

Evidence

The inspector observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, staff, parents and carers, and groups of pupils. Meetings were also held with the Chair of the Governing Body, a Parents' Champion, a representative from the local authority, and the National Leader in Education who is coordinating external support for the school.

Context

Since the last monitoring inspection, a new Chair of the Governing Body has been appointed.

Achievement of pupils at the school

Pupils' attainment by the end of Key Stage 2 continues to improve across all subjects, so that Year 6 pupils are currently on course to continue an upward trend in national test results. In particular, a much higher proportion of pupils are now attaining higher Level 5 performance in their work in English and mathematics. Pupils in mixed Years 5/6 classes were observed making excellent progress in both subjects, with higher attainers clearly aware of the criteria they need to achieve to get higher-level marks, and working with enjoyment, application and confidence. School data suggest that, while attainment is unlikely to improve markedly overall this year by the end of Key Stage 1 in English or mathematics, pupils make generally good progress relative to their starting points. Higher proportions of pupils in Year 2 are reaching the nationally expected Level 2 in both reading and writing.

The whole-school focus on developing pupils' reading skills has been highly successful. Pupils, and children in the Early Years Foundation Stage, have a very good ability to link letters and sounds in reading words, and do not hesitate to apply this when in difficulty. They are also aware of the need to understand the text so that they can read for meaning. As a result, assessments show that, across the school, pupils have made strong gains in their reading and writing. Writing standards are, however, still inhibited to some extent by pupils' lack of confidence in using a rich vocabulary and, for some, by weaknesses in their care and accuracy in forming letters and presenting work. Pupils told inspectors that they liked their clear targets for calculation in mathematics. They enjoy moving to more challenging problem-solving exercises more quickly now, and this is boosting the proportion of pupils reaching higher levels of attainment in mathematics at both key stages.

Progress since the last monitoring inspection on the areas for improvement:

- by Summer 2012 raise attainment and achievement of all pupils and especially in English and for more able pupils – good.

The quality of teaching

The quality of teaching continues to improve, so that most of the lessons observed on this inspection were good or better, and over a quarter were outstanding. Teachers' use of assessment information has now become a key strength in ensuring that pupils learn well in lessons. Teachers plan tasks effectively to offer greater challenge to more-able pupils and to provide helpful support and structure to those who find learning more difficult. A significant improvement since the last monitoring inspection is that teachers are increasingly alert to the readiness of pupils of all abilities to rise to the next level of challenge, so that pupils do not spend too long repeating things they can already do. Teaching was outstanding in a mathematics lesson in Year 6, for example, where the teacher carefully monitored the progress of all pupils through a series of tasks and intervened to issue more complex tasks as soon as pupils were confident in their basic skills and understanding. Just occasionally, there are still instances where higher attainers spend too long on routine, unchallenging tasks. However, it is evident that the extensive monitoring and professional development of teaching, which has enabled teachers to see, discuss and share good practice, have promoted much improvement in the ways in which pupils' needs are met in the classroom.

The training of teaching assistants to help deliver the school's reading and calculation strategies has contributed much to the effective and well-targeted support provided for specific groups of pupils. The needs of pupils with disabilities and those with special educational needs are carefully assessed. The impact of specific interventions to support pupils' literacy and numeracy skills is now comprehensively measured to enable these programmes to be evaluated regularly and refined to best suit pupils' needs.

Teachers' marking and feedback to pupils remain a particular strength in English. Pupils across Key Stages 1 and 2 are becoming increasingly confident in assessing their own work and that of others against clear success criteria for pieces of writing, so that many are sharply aware of the most important skills they need to improve. Similarly, pupils like the way in which targets in mathematics at bronze, silver and gold levels set out very clearly the calculation skills they need address to raise the quality of their work. Marking in mathematics is becoming more specifically linked to such criteria. In other subjects, marking remains more variable in quality, and this results in variations in the care which pupils take in writing up and presenting work. There are, however, examples where the teacher's high expectations are clearly communicated in marking of topic books, and where pupils have consequently responded with work of good quality.

The school's phonics programme to help pupils make links between letters and sounds is very well managed and delivered effectively by teachers. The daily guided-reading programme is relatively new and, while generally well structured, its quality

is uneven in places, especially in ensuring that all groups of pupils learn purposefully when working independently.

Progress since the last monitoring inspection on the areas for improvement:

- increase the proportion of good and better teaching and learning – good.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils continue to demonstrate positive attitudes to learning. They behave well in the large majority of lessons where they are able to engage quickly in enjoyable and challenging activities, but can be restless in the very small number of instances where their pace of learning slows. Pupils are polite and courteous in corridors and playgrounds, where good relationships prevail.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

Since the last monitoring inspection, the school has further raised its targets for pupil outcomes and for the quality of provision, so that they are now sufficiently challenging. Leaders at all levels in the school are now much more sharply aware of the importance of measuring progress against challenging targets, in order to hold the school to account for performance and thereby drive improvement. This has significantly increased the school's capacity to improve. The headteacher and other leaders have engaged in detailed monitoring and evaluation of the school's progress against its action plan objectives, and have shared the findings regularly and openly with staff. Staff have made a highly positive contribution in delivering improvements in the classroom, and have been well supported through regular training and professional development activities. As a consequence, the quality of teaching has shown sustained improvement, and the school is successfully addressing specific areas of previous weakness, such as the performance of higher-attaining pupils. The school now recognises the need to broaden its self-evaluation to cover aspects of performance beyond the immediate features of its post-inspection action plan.

The new Chair of the Governing Body has a clear vision for improving the effectiveness of governance in holding the school to account. Governors have been trained in the analysis of pupil achievement data so that they can, and do, play a more effective role in challenging leaders on questions of school performance. The roles of individual members of the governing body have been redefined to secure more effective working relationships between the governing body, leaders and staff. The role of the Parents' Champions has been greatly clarified to enable them to act more effectively as conduits for parents' and carers' views and as a source of advice for parents and carers about who to contact to resolve specific issues.

Progress since the last monitoring inspection on the areas for improvement:

- make effective use of the tracking data and assessments of pupils' progress – good.

External support

External support provided by the local authority and directed by the National Leader in Education continues to be highly effective in driving improvement. The National Leader in Education has worked with the headteacher to secure a more effective distribution of leadership across the school, which has done much to increase the school's capacity to improve. Consultant support for teachers in literacy and numeracy has been very successful in strengthening teachers' planning of lessons and aspects of the curriculum, as well as the quality of classroom teaching. School staff and leaders have benefited from increasing opportunities to work with local partner schools to see and share good practice in teaching and learning.