

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

18 May 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 Christopher Russell, Her Majesty's Inspector, to your school on 16 and 17 May 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 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 – good

Progress since the 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 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 second monitoring inspection on 16 and 17 May 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, the Chair of the Interim Executive Board, a representative from the local authority and a group of pupils from Key Stage 2.

Context

The school's staffing has remained unchanged since the previous monitoring visit. A new subject leader for mathematics has been appointed from within the existing staff. The interim headteacher has been appointed to lead the school on a permanent basis and will take up her post from September. Two new members have joined the interim executive board.

The interim headteacher drew up proposals for a more streamlined senior team last term. These changes have now been agreed and will come into effect from September. Appointments to most key posts have been made.

Achievement of pupils at the school

Teachers' assessment skills in writing and mathematics have continued to improve and all have now had training in assessing standards in reading. Recent moderation of reading assessments led by the local authority found that teachers' judgements of attainment were accurate. Senior leaders are confident that assessments give an accurate picture of pupils' attainment in all subjects.

Inspectors saw evidence that provision for reading has been improved across the school and visited a well-organised group reading session. Teaching assistants have been trained to support reading and a group of parent volunteers visit regularly to read with pupils. Parents and carers report that they have seen a dramatic improvement in their children's reading since the previous monitoring visit. School tracking indicates that about a third of pupils in Key Stage 1 have made accelerated progress in reading this year.

It is clear that the profile of writing has been raised across the school. In the Early Years Foundation Stage unit, the classroom area is now rich in language. Play activities have a greater focus on promoting communication skills. Children's writing is displayed prominently and there are more opportunities for children to write. For example, in the role play area there are large whiteboards and pens provided and

teachers model how the children might use them in their play. Elsewhere in the school, there are displays celebrating good achievement in writing and pupils' books show an increased focus on providing meaningful opportunities for writing in English and in other curriculum subjects. Progress in writing has improved. Data from assessments undertaken in March show that many pupils in Year 1 and Year 2 have made significant progress and are writing with confidence and enthusiasm. This is confirmed by work in pupils' books. The gap between the standards attained by pupils at the end of Key Stage 1 compared with standards of pupils nationally is narrowing.

The new subject leader for mathematics has already analysed progress data for her subject. This shows a steadily improving picture with particularly good progress in upper Key Stage 2. School leaders have recently introduced 'target books' for mathematics that enable older pupils to assess and track their own progress. Pupils say that they find the books useful and that the targets help them to understand what their next steps in learning are.

Teachers assess pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics at agreed intervals and enter data onto the school's electronic tracking system. The data are analysed by senior leaders to look at patterns of achievement across the school. Meetings to discuss pupils' progress are now established and teachers say they have found these supportive. Records of meetings indicate that the discussion focuses on pupils who have not made progress and appropriate actions are agreed to deal with the underachievement. At present, these actions do not have measurable outcomes and so it is difficult for school leaders to assess their impact.

The interim headteacher has taken the role of assessment leader and she has developed the school's tracking system so that the progress of groups of pupils who may be particularly vulnerable to underachievement can be tracked. This information is available for each class and shows that the progress that disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make over time remains variable across the school. In lessons seen during the inspection, support for these pupils was mainly well targeted and the tasks set were better matched to their needs, enabling many of them to make good progress in their learning. Teaching assistants have received further training to develop their skills. Many are now able to work alongside pupils and guide their learning effectively, but this is not absolutely consistent across the school.

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

- Enhance the rate of pupils' progress, especially in Key Stage 1 in reading, writing and mathematics – good

The quality of teaching

The quality of teaching seen during this inspection was at least satisfactory and in the majority of lessons, it was good. This confirms the school's own assessments. School leaders have made good use of external support from a partner school to improve teachers' practice in Key Stage 1. This tailored support has resulted in a change to the way that lessons are structured, better pace of learning and a sharper match of activities to pupils' abilities. Teachers deploy teaching assistants in a more effective way and develop pupils' independence and resilience by setting work for them to complete without support. Evidence in pupils' workbooks suggests that this has resulted in better progress in lessons.

Across the school, teachers have generally become more skilled at using their assessments to plan activities that are more closely matched to pupils' needs. Pupils say that lessons are more interesting now. This is because teachers are making learning relevant for pupils and linking learning across subjects. For example, in a Year 2 science lesson pupils were using Venn diagrams to sort photographs of themselves according to different physical characteristics such as hair colour and length. In Year 5, pupils were analysing results data from an Olympic diving event as part of a mathematics lesson linked to a topic on the Olympic Games.

There is a larger-than-average proportion of newly qualified teachers in the school. The headteacher has reviewed mentor support and has acted to ensure that all inexperienced staff receive high quality support and training to develop their skills. School leaders are aware that there are still inconsistencies in the quality of teaching across the school. In the minority of classes where teaching is not yet consistently good, pupils are making satisfactory rather than good progress over time and are not able to make up lost ground. Less effective teaching typically has one or more of the following features.

- Inconsistency in the way that teachers manage pupils' behaviour.
- Unclear expectations of what pupils should achieve in lessons.
- Over-direction of activities by teachers and teaching assistants.
- Weaknesses in adults' use of questioning.

The quality of marking and feedback continues to be good. More emphasis has been placed on presentation skills and handwriting and there is a consistent approach across the school. However, the expectation that pupils who struggle to write should write the learning objective of the lesson in their books before they start work is not appropriate and leads to wasted time in lessons. The way in which teachers set targets for pupils' learning in mathematics has recently changed. While still quite new, this is a promising development and school leaders will be introducing a similar system for targets in English.

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

- Raise the quality of teaching to 75% good or better by July 2012 – good

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils say that behaviour has improved. They report that systems are in place to deal with any problems and disruption to lessons has been reduced. They feel that lessons are more enjoyable and that work is more interesting now. Inspectors found that behaviour in lessons has improved. In most lessons seen during the inspection pupils displayed good attitudes to learning. They worked hard and concentrated well on the tasks they had been given.

A few pupils have severe problems in managing their behaviour and the school is working closely with parents and carers and outside agencies to ensure that they receive the best possible support. In the vast majority of lessons teachers now manage pupils' behaviour in a consistent way so that pupils do not shout out or interrupt each other. Teachers acknowledge and praise good behaviour and insist on politeness at all times.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

The pace of school improvement has accelerated since the previous monitoring inspection. Parents and carers spoken to during this inspection recognise the improvements that have been made, particularly with regard to reading. They identified the strong leadership of the interim headteacher as a key factor in driving improvement.

The capacity of senior leaders and middle leaders to make a full contribution to the school's improvement has grown. All have had training in the analysis of published performance data and they now routinely receive updated in-year tracking data so that they can evaluate progress and plan next steps. They have developed their skills in monitoring the work of the school with the support of an adviser from the local authority. The new mathematics subject leader has attended a training course and is already making good use of the improvement strategies she has learned. Core subject leaders have written short-term plans for development in their subjects to ensure that the momentum of improvement is maintained. As yet, these are not sufficiently well linked to the main school development plan and the planned outcomes of their actions are not measurable.

The relationship between the headteacher and the interim executive board is strong and members of the board receive a wide range of information about the school's performance and offer a good level of challenge and support to the school. Members of the board joined staff during a recent school training day and have also visited classrooms to assess the impact of some of the recent changes on pupils' learning.

Senior leaders have carried out a range of monitoring activities to check on improvements to the quality of teaching. Information from regular lesson observations and discussions with pupils about their views on teaching and learning have been used to provide detailed feedback to staff. Staff have responded well and, as a result, the quality of teaching has improved.

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

- Improve the leadership and management of the school – good

External support

The local authority's reviews of the school's effectiveness and progress in addressing areas for improvement provide a useful supplement to HMI monitoring visits and provide school leaders with valuable advice. Local authority support has led to clear improvement in the quality of assessment and in provision for reading. A teacher from a partner school has provided support and advice to teachers in Key Stage 1. This has resulted in significant improvements in the way they organise teaching and learning in their classes.