

Serco Inspections
Cedar House
21 William Street
Edgbaston
Birmingham
B15 1LH

T 0300 123 1231
Text Phone: 0161 6188524
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk **Serco**
www.ofsted.gov.uk **Direct T** 0121 683 3888



15 June 2012

Ms D Gerring
Headteacher
Bennerley Fields Specialist Speech and Language College
Stratford Street
Cotmanhay
Ilkeston
DE7 8QZ

Dear Ms Gerring

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Bennerley Fields Specialist Speech and Language College

Following my visit to your school on 13–14 June 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 January 2012. 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 be appointed only in consultation with HMI.

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 Derbyshire.

Yours sincerely

Sue Morris-King
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in January 2012

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning for pupils in Key Stages 2, 3 and 4 by:
 - eradicating all inadequate teaching
 - ensuring best practice in the use of assessment is adopted by all teachers, in order to inform teaching and appropriately challenge pupils of all abilities in lessons
 - ensuring that the stronger practice is used to model and inform all teaching, so that pupils are able to make improved progress
 - establishing links with other schools where there is good and outstanding practice so that staff can be exposed to higher levels of expectation
 - providing pupils with opportunities to work independently and to have more responsibilities.

- Improve the school's capacity to sustain improvement by:
 - ensuring all members of the school community consistently focus on accelerating pupils' progress
 - developing a more rigorous approach to performance management so that lines of accountability are clear and focus on pupils' achievement
 - ensuring better coordination of the work undertaken to improve how teachers use assessment data to inform their teaching
 - review all roles and responsibilities so that there are clear line-management structures which focus on meeting the changing needs and raising the achievement of all pupils
 - ensuring all initiatives are rigorously monitored and reviewed to demonstrate a clear and rapid impact on improving provision and outcomes for pupils
 - establishing robust procedures for the monitoring of teaching and learning and ensure that high expectations inform judgements in this area.

- Improve achievement for all pupils by:
 - ensuring there is consistency in all areas of the school's work through robust monitoring of performance
 - establishing systems which focus on assessing how well pupils are developing aspects of their personal skills.

Special measures: monitoring of Bennerley Fields Specialist Speech and Language College

Report from the first monitoring inspection on 13–14 June 2012

Evidence

The inspector observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher and the senior leadership team; the Vice Chair of governors and two other governors; and two representatives from the local authority. Informal discussions were held with pupils.

Context

Since the previous inspection, three teachers and the deputy headteacher have tendered their resignation with effect from the end of the summer term. Several teachers have been absent through ill health for various periods of time and their classes have been covered by temporary staff or teaching assistants.

Achievement of pupils at the school

Senior leaders have rightly concluded that the school's data about pupils' attainment in English, mathematics and science is not accurate and cannot therefore be used to provide evidence of pupils' progress over time. Where teaching has been or remains inadequate, pupils' progress is minimal. However where teaching has improved and has become more closely tailored to pupils' needs, the work in pupils' books and folders has begun to improve accordingly. For many, it is starting to show signs of progress. Clearer routines for pupils with complex needs are allowing them to be more settled in lessons and therefore to learn more effectively

In the lessons observed during the inspection, pupils' progress was directly related to the quality of the teaching. Where teaching was tailored reasonably well to pupils' needs, they made satisfactory progress with the specific aspects being taught. Where pupils made inadequate progress, this was linked to the teaching and sometimes also to the curriculum, which is not always suitable. At Key Stage 4, pupils are working towards a limited range and standard of accreditation, and this is inhibiting their achievement because they are too often being taught at too low a level.

The strong emphasis that the headteacher has placed on developing pupils' independence is beginning to have an impact on their personal development. Pupils are taking more responsibility for the choices they make within the school day, for example where and with whom they sit at lunchtime. Some are becoming less reliant on adults prompting them when they are working. The opportunities for pupils to develop their independence in this way are not yet consistent. The oldest pupils in

particular are not being allowed to be sufficiently independent in organising themselves.

Progress since the last section 5 inspection:

- improve achievement for all pupils – satisfactory.

The quality of teaching

Improving the quality of teaching has rightly been the headteacher's main focus since she took up her post shortly before the previous inspection. She has carried out extensive lesson observations which have been clearly focused on the outcomes for pupils. This has provided a clear baseline for improvement and enabled her to identify where there are generic weaknesses in individuals' teaching and where there are more widespread, whole-school training needs. The subsequent actions she has taken, with the support of senior leaders, have been robust and wide-ranging. These have not had an impact on all teachers' performance, and serious inadequacies in teaching remain. There are, nevertheless, signs of improvements in teaching in many areas of the school.

All teachers are now using a new, clear format for their planning, which has helped to clarify what elements are expected in each lesson. Planning in many classes has begun to be more closely linked to the desired outcomes for pupils, although this is hampered by the current lack of accurate assessment information. Leaders, with the support of the local authority, are working closely with staff, where needed, to improve their competence and confidence in assessing the levels at which pupils are working. Classrooms have been reorganised and the learning environment is beginning to improve, though much remains to be done on this aspect. Increasing use is being made of newly established links with other schools to improve assessment and other aspects of teaching.

The teaching observed during the inspection was a mixture of satisfactory and inadequate. Where teaching was satisfactory, there were often good elements, for example some good use of questioning, interesting and relevant activities, and good development of pupils' independence. Inadequate teaching related to activities that did not meet pupils' needs, sometimes combined with low expectations and a lack of challenge. Some teachers need further training to allow them to teach subjects, for example mathematics, at higher levels.

Progress since the last section 5 inspection:

- improve the quality of teaching and learning for pupils in Key Stages 2, 3 and 4 – satisfactory.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

The headteacher has set a clear direction for the way in which she expects pupils to be treated and their behaviour to be managed. The majority of staff are following this lead. Pupils are responding well to the new ways of working and the higher expectations of them that many staff now have. Where they are being given more opportunities for independence, they are embracing these with enthusiasm. They have welcomed the new appointments of a head boy and head girl, and their involvement in this process. Several pupils were involved in the 'visioning day', where they worked alongside staff, parents and governors to develop a new vision statement and to write this in a way that both adults and children could understand. This statement is prominently displayed throughout the school and is referred to by both staff and pupils to promote positive attitudes.

In lessons, pupils generally behave well, even when they are not challenged or engaged, tending to chat quietly or just stop working rather than disrupt if they are bored. Sometimes staff do not notice this off-task behaviour or analyse the reasons for it.

Attendance is below average overall. Many pupils' attendance is very high, but a small number have low attendance. The headteacher has identified the need to tackle low attendance more vigorously.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

The headteacher has a realistic and accurate understanding of the extent of the issues in the school. She has set a clear, positive direction for the school's future. Crucially, she has explained this direction to staff, parents and carers, pupils and governors, and involved them in influencing the details. At the same time, the headteacher has carefully prioritised the weaknesses and systematically begun to tackle them. The assistant headteachers have begun to play a role that is more commensurate with their positions, and to maximise their strengths to support other staff. For example, the carefully structured 'support plans' for several staff are having an impact on the quality of their teaching. The majority of staff are rising to the challenges of improving the school. They are keen to be involved in training opportunities and to seek advice where needed.

The headteacher has accurately identified that the curriculum does not fully meet some pupils' needs. This is a wide-ranging issue in Key Stage 4, but also includes the way in which other subjects are organised in some areas of the school and the wider opportunities that pupils have for enrichment and experiences off-site. Learning experiences in the local community, linked to a particular subject or to personal and social development, have successfully begun. The headteacher has placed an emphasis on improving communication throughout the school, and the speech and language therapists are closely involved with this work.

Many parents and carers have accepted the invitation to spend time in their children's classrooms during a recent open week, and governors report that parents and carers are pleased with the welcome they receive in school on a day-to-day basis.

Six governors have organised themselves into three groups: one group to oversee progress against each of the areas for improvement from the previous inspection. This approach is giving these governors a more in-depth understanding of the school, and allowing them to keep other members of the governing body well informed. Several of these governors are also visiting the school on a frequent basis. The Chair is not involved in these committees and does not come into school frequently. The discrepancies between these different levels of involvement are causing some tensions to exist within the governing body. Governors and the local authority are aware of the urgent need to resolve these in order that they do not undermine the school's progress.

Progress since the last section 5 inspection:

- improve the school's capacity to sustain improvement – satisfactory.

External support

The local authority has organised its support for the school well. The link adviser frequently visits the school and has a good overview of its progress. Support is carefully tailored to the school's priority needs and altered as necessary. The review meetings are thoroughly recorded and show a good focus on the impact of the support. Governors have benefited from the training provided by the local authority. The local authority is aware of the urgent need to support the governing body to resolve its current issues. The authority has also agreed to help the school to secure urgent support to improve the curriculum and accreditation at Key Stage 4.