

Tribal  
1-4 Portland Square  
Bristol  
BS2 8RR

T 0300 123 1231  
Text Phone: 0161 6188524  
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk  
[www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

Direct T 0117 3115319

Direct F 0117 3150430

Direct email: matthew.parker@tribalgroup.com



3 October 2012

Mrs S Harratt  
Executive Headteacher  
Henry Allen Nursery School  
Mitchell Walk  
Amersham  
HP6 6NW

Dear Mrs Harratt

### **Special measures: monitoring inspection of Henry Allen Nursery School**

Following my visit to your school on 1-2 October 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 third 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 previous monitoring inspection – good

One newly qualified teacher may be appointed under the condition that he/she is mentored by the senior Early Years leader.

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 Buckinghamshire.

Yours sincerely

David Curtis

**Additional Inspector**

## **Annex**

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

- Ensure that children are kept safe by meeting statutory requirements in all areas of safeguarding.
- Implement current plans to meet fully statutory requirements for staffing levels.
- Improve leadership and management by:
  - increasing the rigour of self-evaluation by leaders at all levels and developing a shared vision for improvement
  - ensuring that the performance of all staff is appraised each year
  - improving communication in school so that adults feel valued and confident about contributing their ideas to development planning
  - regularly monitoring teaching and learning so that adults are helped to improve their teaching
  - analysing assessment data to check the progress of different groups of children and to identify where improvement is needed.
- Improve attendance rates by ensuring that absences are monitored more closely to identify trends and patterns.
- Strengthen the curriculum and increase children's physical activity by:
  - ensuring that outdoor learning is fully integrated into every area of learning
  - facilitating more free-flow between the classrooms and outdoor areas.
- Improve teaching by:
  - ensuring activities are more consistently pitched at the right level
  - giving children more opportunities to talk about their learning at the end of lessons.

## **Special measures: monitoring of Henry Allen Nursery School**

### **Report from the third monitoring inspection on 1–2 October 2012**

#### **Evidence**

The inspector observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the Nursery Staff, the Executive Headteacher and senior Early Years leader, the Chair of the Interim Executive Board, a representative of the local authority and a parent. The inspector took note of the 12 responses to the online questionnaire (Parent View) and three written notes sent in to the school by parents and carers.

#### **Context**

On 1 September 2012, the Nursery moved into temporary accommodation within Woodside Junior School, which includes access to a secure outdoor area. The existing Nursery building is scheduled to be demolished and a new Nursery built ready for 1 September 2013. The headteacher of Woodside Junior School was appointed as Executive Headteacher of the Nursery as from 1 September 2012, together with a new senior Early Years leader, and a new part-time teacher. A shadow governing body is in place and is scheduled to replace the Interim Executive Board from 1 January 2013.

#### **Achievement of pupils at the school**

Children's achievement is improving and evidence indicates that many make much better progress in their learning. Within communication and language, they enjoy listening to stories and reading books with an adult. They show growing confidence in listening and in asking questions. A few write their names unaided, with the rest making a determined effort to do so. Children enjoy mark-making, as was seen when they made treasure maps as part of the current theme of 'Pirates'. In mathematics, children are confident in counting to ten and, when counting the number present in their key group at the start of sessions, many know numbers up to 16.

Progress in physical development is much better because children have regular access to a good range of resources, both indoors and outdoors. Children particularly enjoy the outdoor obstacle course and enjoy the challenge of completing it by running, jumping, hopping, and then doing it with a beanbag on their head. In expressive arts and design, children show imagination and skill in the use, for example, of a feather as a 'painting tool' when creating imaginative 'Autumn' paintings, prints and collages. Through a good range of 'small world' toys and access to the junior school's grounds, children's understanding of the world is developed successfully.

## **The quality of teaching**

Nursery staff have amended fully their planning to meet the new learning and development requirements of the Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage which came into effect on 1 September 2012. All staff are expected to contribute to planning which strengthens the role of the key person. However, planning does not always focus closely enough on what children are expected to learn. At times, it focuses too much on activities to be covered.

Staff have very positive relationships with children and this has a positive impact on children's learning and development. They are skilled at storytelling, which promotes successfully children's enjoyment of reading. Staff use questioning skills effectively to move children's learning forward, especially through the use of 'How?' and 'Why?' In one activity, children's understanding of 'being a customer' in a garage was extended when the 'attendant' asked how many litres of fuel they wanted and asked to be paid.

Staff have amended successfully their assessment of children's learning and development to sit with the revised 'Development Matters' criteria which came into effect on 1 September 2012. Children's learning is assessed frequently, with staff making very effective use of focused observations on their key groups. Using school digital cameras, they build up a photographic record of children's progress. The school has yet to develop fully for each child a 'Learning Journey' of which children and parents and carers have sufficient ownership.

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

- Improve teaching – good

## **Behaviour and safety of pupils**

Children have settled remarkably well into their new accommodation. They are secure, happy and confident and engage immediately in learning at the start of each session. They have a strong awareness of the importance of washing their hands by, as they say, 'using soap and hot water'. Children know that they must wear an apron when doing 'messy' activities, and they move around the building sensibly. Parents and carers raised no issues about their children being safe at Nursery.

The school has worked successfully with parents and carers to stress the importance of good attendance and its vital link with their children's achievement. There has been a significant reduction in unauthorised absence, with authorised absence linked mainly to childhood illnesses, such as chicken pox.

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

- Improve attendance rates by ensuring that absences are monitored more closely to identify trends and patterns – good

### **The quality of leadership in and management of the school**

The Interim Executive Board and the Executive Headteacher give safeguarding the highest priority. The school complies fully with all statutory requirements for safeguarding children, including the use of cameras and mobile phones. It now meets fully the statutory requirements for the correct number of qualified teachers for the number of children on roll.

The Executive Headteacher and the senior Early Years leader have made a strong start to bringing a much needed stability to the leadership and management of the school. Supported effectively by the Interim Executive Board, they ensured a smooth transition into the junior school building and that there was no negative impact on children's learning. At the same time, they have ensured that the learning and development, and safeguarding and welfare, comply with the requirements of the Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage. Importantly, there is good provision both indoors and outdoors for children's physical development. Bearing in mind that the Nursery is in temporary accommodation and that the junior school is a listed building, staff have detailed plans for free-flow between indoors and outdoors once contractors have put in new external doors.

Significant changes in leadership and management since the school was put into special measures mean that self-evaluation of its performance has been erratic and there has been inconsistency in both the monitoring of teaching and learning, and in performance management of staff. Falling rolls, with implications for redundancy and the management of a deficit budget, have been a high priority for the Interim Executive Board and the interim senior leadership teams. However, the Executive Headteacher and senior Early Years leader have a clear focus and drive to ensure continuing school improvement for the current academic year and for when the Nursery moves into its new building and beyond.

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

- Ensure that children are kept safe by meeting statutory requirements in all areas of safeguarding – outstanding
- Implement current plans to meet fully statutory requirements for staffing levels – outstanding
- Improve leadership and management – good
- Strengthen the curriculum and increase children's physical activity – good

## **External support**

The local authority has supported the school effectively through a significant period of challenge and uncertainty. The LA School Improvement Advisor for Early Years has provided strong support in relation to children's learning and development. Other key staff have supported the school effectively in relation to the rebuild, staffing and budget issues.