

Serco Inspections
Cedar House
21 William Street T 0300 123 1231
Edgbaston Text Phone: 0161 6188524
Birmingham enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
B15 1LH www.ofsted.gov.uk



19 October 2012

Ian Evason
Headteacher
Beauchamp Middle School
Hawk Drive
Bedford
MK41 7JE

Dear Mr Evason

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Beauchamp Middle School

Following my visit with Helen Bailey, Additional Inspector, to your school on 17–18 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 – satisfactory.

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – satisfactory.

Newly qualified teachers may only be appointed subject to prior discussion 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 Interim Executive Board and the Director of Children's Services for Bedford Borough.

Yours sincerely

Trevor Riddiough
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

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

- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
 - developing the leadership skills of senior and middle leaders
 - revising the leadership structure and systems to ensure that staff are accountable for pupils' progress
 - ensuring the governing body provides effective challenge to the school in order to address weaknesses and bring about improvement
 - ensuring that teachers' assessment of pupil attainment is accurate
 - improving the analysis and use of data to inform both strategic planning and teachers' lesson planning.

- Improve the quality of teaching by:
 - regularly monitoring lessons and providing teachers with specific feedback for improvement
 - sharing more effectively the existing good practice
 - ensuring day-to-day assessment is used successfully to promote progress and to enable pupils to share responsibility for their learning.

Special measures: monitoring of Beauchamp Middle School

Report from the third monitoring inspection on 17–18 October 2012

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and incident logs. They met with representatives of the interim executive board, a representative from the local authority and spoke to school leaders, teachers individually and in groups, and individual pupils. They observed 14 staff teach 14 lessons and carried out brief visits to a series of other lessons.

Context

Since the last monitoring visit in May 2012, there have been a significant number of teaching staff changes. Nine teachers joined the school in September 2012. A number of new roles have been created in middle leadership positions and a new senior leadership team has been formed.

Achievement of pupils at the school

The attainment of pupils has risen since the last inspection and progress levels have improved throughout the school in some subjects. Pupils join the school in Year 5 with levels of attainment that are above average. By the time pupils reached Year 8 in 2012, attainment was broadly in line with the national average in English, while in mathematics it was above average. This represents below-average progress in English and average progress in mathematics. Data held by the school show variations in the performance of other subjects in the school in 2012, with achievement being above expected levels in art, information and communication technology (ICT), music and physical education (PE); while in modern foreign languages and science it was below expected levels. The main reason for this variability has been due to weak teaching in certain subjects. The school has pinpointed these weaknesses and made the necessary changes and improvements. The indications from the data on the progress of pupils currently in school are that progress is improving in these weaker subjects across all year groups. While it is too soon to see the full impact of these changes on end-of-year assessments, observations in lessons show that progress levels are improving, but not yet at a rate fast enough to bring them up to those levels seen in the best subjects.

The school has set up new systems to monitor pupils' progress. Senior leaders and heads of department review the school's tracking data regularly to identify individuals and teaching groups who perform below, at or above expectations. Various interventions, including booster classes, one-to-one tuition, catch-up clubs, guided reading, and gifted and talented support programmes, are helping pupils to

gain lost ground and reach the targets set by the school. Many of these activities take place as part of a structured programme at the start of every day. There are early signs of success.

The quality of teaching

Targeted strategies for improving the quality of teaching are being implemented. The proportion of good or better teaching has improved. All of the lessons observed on this visit were satisfactory and just over half were good or better. This matches closely the school's own evaluation of teaching, which is based on regular, unannounced observations by senior staff and heads of department. Observations are followed up with clear feedback that identifies strengths and areas for further improvement. Some lessons seen during this monitoring inspection were outstanding. Inadequate teaching has been eliminated.

In the best lessons, learning outcomes are designed to build on pupils' learning step by step. The attainment level for each step is made clear to pupils so that they can readily see what level they are working at and how they might progress to the next one. This motivates pupils to make the most of their lessons and achieve as much as possible. Learning activities are active, interesting and move on quickly so that pupils readily join in, make progress and enjoy their work. Questioning is used effectively to ensure that pupils can think about a problem and solve it for themselves.

However, these good features are not seen consistently in all lessons. It is this variation in teaching that is holding back pupils' progress in some classes and in some subjects. The use of assessment to support learning continues to improve and accuracy of teacher assessment has increased, supported by regular moderation exercises. However, it is not yet universally effective. In lessons that require improvement, planning is not always aimed at the full range of abilities in the class to ensure that all pupils can make good progress. For example, some learning objectives indicate that all pupils should get to the expected level and only a few beyond. This results in no better than satisfactory progress, which is not sufficient to enable these pupils to make up lost ground.

The new emphasis on active learning means that pupils are more involved in their work and occasions when lessons are disrupted by poor behaviour are now very rare. The quality of marking has improved but continues to be variable. While most teachers provide useful verbal advice on the next steps in learning, not all written comments are followed up by the pupils and so they miss further opportunities to improve.

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

- improve the quality of teaching – satisfactory.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

The school has continued to improve and consolidate the behaviour and safety of pupils. The revised behaviour policy has become an accepted part of day-to-day practice. Expectations are clear to staff and to pupils, and pupils say that they notice the changes that this has brought about. They report that incidents in classrooms and in social time are now very rare, that they feel very safe in school and that their teachers go out of their way to include them. Pupils are very happy to come to school and this is reflected in their above-average attendance. These positive features are endorsed by inspection findings. Behaviour logs show that disruption in classes has reduced significantly and that bullying is now very rare. Furthermore, pupils behaved well in all lessons observed, and exhibited positive attitudes to their learning.

Weekly behaviour briefings to staff develop their practice in positive behaviour management. For example, in one session seen during the inspection, the assistant headteacher worked with all staff to further develop their skills in how to work positively with pupils to avoid confrontation. Support for pupils whose circumstances make them vulnerable is offered by full-time professional staff in a specialist resource base. Here, strategies are developed that enable pupils to improve their behaviour, develop their basic skills and re-engage and participate fully in school life. Pupils appreciate the support they gain here and know that there is always someone to turn to if they have problems or are being bullied. They are very confident that their concerns will be followed up.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

The headteacher leads by example and demonstrates complete commitment to driving up standards and securing continuous improvement. Together with the interim executive board, he sets high expectations of all who work in the school: staff and pupils alike. Changes in middle leadership, as well as the reorganisation of the senior leadership team, have raised ambition and increased the momentum for change. The school's single plan identifies clearly what needs to be done and much of the essential work has now been carried out. Reviewed and more-effective practices and procedures are now in place and teachers' roles have been redefined and reorganised such that they can be carried out effectively. Teachers understand their own accountability for pupils' progress. However, it is too soon for these improvements in provision to have a sustainable impact on pupils' achievement.

The school has rightly identified improvements in teaching and learning to be its number-one priority. Through general training opportunities, teachers now have a clear idea of what constitutes good teaching and what is expected of them in order to achieve it. Weekly teaching briefings are used to identify, share and develop good

practice. Regular monitoring ensures that weaknesses can be identified and worked on. While inadequate teaching has been eliminated, weaknesses still remain in the variability of teaching practice across the school. The school is aware of these and has plans to address them. There is also variability in the effectiveness of some subjects across the school which requires further action by the heads of department to address them.

Pupils' progress is tracked closely using the new data system. Senior leaders and heads of department use the information to inform them of how well each department is doing as well as to identify the pupils at risk of underachieving. However, it is not consistently enough used by teachers to aid their planning and ensure that they cater for the learning needs of pupils of all abilities in the class.

The interim executive board is ensuring that the school is highly focused on the key improvement issues. It has taken the lead and challenged the school to make the difficult decisions necessary while supporting it to ensure that the school improves. The school's improvement plan is strongly focused on raising achievement and developing leadership and teaching and, as such, is an appropriate tool to direct the actions that are required. However, there is little evidence that the interim executive board or senior leaders have carried out evaluations that measure the progress and full impact of these actions. Self-evaluations carried out by heads of department provide a useful measure of progress and impact at departmental level. However, the lack of a whole-school overview makes it difficult for the school to be aware of its overall effectiveness in the key areas of its work.

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

- improve the effectiveness of leadership and management – satisfactory.

External support

The school has received invaluable support from the interim executive board. Its individual members offer on-going professional advice directly to the headteacher and senior team. Through its contacts with other schools and the local authority, it has been able to provide bespoke support in a number of areas. The local authority has provided critical advice and backing on personnel matters. It has also provided funding for the school to join the 'achievement for all' project aimed at raising the attainment of low-achieving pupils. External consultancy has also been provided to increase the capacity of the senior leadership team during the summer term as well as for tailored support in English.