

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

24 October 2012

Christine Edden  
Principal  
Heathermount, the Learning Centre  
Devenish Road  
Ascot  
Berkshire  
SL5 9PG

Dear Ms Edden

**Special measures: monitoring inspection of Heathermount, the Learning Centre**

Following my visit to your school on 23 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 October 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 – 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 The Disabilities Trust.

Yours sincerely

Andrew Redpath  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Annex**

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

- Improve students' learning and progress so that these are at least satisfactory and they acquire appropriate knowledge, develop understanding and practise skills.
- Raise the quality of teaching to at least satisfactory in all lessons by ensuring that:
  - teachers use assessment information to tailor work to challenge individual students to make further progress
  - lesson objectives and expectations for individuals are clear and these are followed up so that learning can be tracked and built upon
  - teachers provide interesting activities that stimulate students' active participation in all lessons
  - feedback is clear, regular and meaningful, and supports students to improve their learning.
- Ensure that there is a clear curriculum framework in place so that:
  - the range of qualifications available are appropriate to the needs, abilities and interests of the students
  - there is a clear progression planned for students as they go through the school, particularly in mixed-age and key stage classes, so that students are consistently challenged and the content is interesting
  - the curriculum is responsive to the students' particular aspirations, age, disabilities and future destinations
  - the contribution of the school's 'augmentative curriculum' is clear and specialist approaches inform teaching and learning consistently.
- Improve the management of behaviour so that:
  - there are consistent expectations of classroom behaviour, bearing in mind individual difficulties, and inappropriate behaviour is challenged with a clear procedure to re-engage students in learning and make up for time lost
  - there are consistent expectations of behaviour in the dining room and shared spaces and a consistent response, bearing in mind individual difficulties, to how inappropriate behaviour is managed
  - incidents of inappropriate behaviour are systematically recorded in a format that can be quickly analysed and evaluated so that future actions can be planned, carried out consistently and lead to improvement
  - policies and procedures, particularly those relating to the management of behaviour, are up to date and implemented consistently.

- Improve the effectiveness of safeguarding procedures by:
  - improving health and safety procedures
  - strengthening the supervision of students on the school site.
  
- Improve the impact of leaders at all levels on raising achievement by:
  - systematically monitoring and evaluating the quality of the school's provision and the impact on students' outcomes
  - monitoring and using assessment information on individuals and different groups of students to ensure that learning opportunities fully meet their needs
  - ensuring the consistent application of new initiatives, expectations and practices so that any variations or lack of staff knowledge or confidence is quickly addressed.
  
- The school must ensure that it meets the national minimum standards for residential special schools which have not been met.

## **Special measures: monitoring of Heathermount, the Learning Centre**

### **Report from the third monitoring inspection on 23 October 2012**

#### **Evidence**

The inspector observed the school's work, including six lessons, scrutinised documents, held discussions with students and staff, and met with the service director from The Disabilities Trust, the charity which owns the school.

#### **Context**

Since the last monitoring inspection, the school roll has fallen from 47 to 34 students. The large majority of students currently attending are in the secondary age range. Residential provision has been discontinued and the school is now registered with the Department of Education as a day special school. The Disabilities Trust has responded to these changes by reviewing the staffing structure of the school. Since September 2012, there has been a reduction in the full-time equivalent of teaching staff by three and a reduction in support staff by five. The accommodation has been adapted to create a separate base for older post-16 students.

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

The scrutiny of students' work and the learning observed in lessons shows students are continuing to make faster progress. Senior leaders are using data effectively to track the progress of different groups and to compare their progress with students who have similar needs nationally. Evidence shows that students up to Year 11 are broadly making expected progress given their starting points. The small minority of girls are making better than expected progress. Performance in English, especially writing, is weaker than in other subjects. The school has made this a priority area for development and has extended its intensive programme of support for students with low levels of literacy.

Students' achievement is affected by the school's previous underperformance. Post-16 students who left school at the end of the last academic year gained examination passes from a relatively narrow range of subjects, including functional skills in English, mathematics, and information and communication technology and in vocational courses. However, all students progressed to suitable destinations. Most found places in local colleges and some started work-based apprenticeships. The school has enabled some older students to complete apprenticeships at the school in hospitality and catering or in horticulture. More challenging examination courses have been introduced and several students have recently gained GCSE passes in mathematics and science.

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

- Improve students' learning and progress so that it is at least satisfactory and they acquire appropriate knowledge, develop understanding and practise skills – satisfactory.

### **The quality of teaching**

A better climate for learning exists in lessons. Staff manage students' anxious behaviour with greater confidence and incidents of inappropriate behaviour are not allowed to disrupt the flow of the lesson. Students are generally set work which is more closely matched to their abilities. However, targets are not always used effectively to maximise learning, especially for students who have low levels of literacy. For example, while students benefit from individual literacy sessions, targets from these sessions are not shared across subjects to consolidate students' writing skills and to accelerate their progress. Teachers' planning has improved and learning objectives are generally made clear at the beginning of lessons. Planning does not always take sufficient account of how students might complete tasks independently. As a result, teaching assistants sometimes offer too much help, which can inadvertently limit the development of students' independence. Work is marked regularly and comments help students to recognise their achievements and to improve their work.

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

- Raise the quality of teaching to at least satisfactory in all lessons – satisfactory.

### **Behaviour and safety of pupils**

The management of students' behaviour has improved markedly since the introduction of a new behaviour policy. An agreed approach to resolving incidents of inappropriate behaviour is followed consistently by staff. Typically, there is a calm yet firm response to challenging behaviour in lessons, minimising undue attention and ensuring incidents do not disrupt the learning of other students. There is a relaxed atmosphere in the dining hall and other communal areas. A detailed record of incidents is kept and senior leaders monitor information closely to detect any patterns or causes. Data show that the number of incidents of inappropriate behaviour has fallen sharply over the past year. Students recognise that behaviour has improved and feel that school rules are clearer.

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

- Improve the management of behaviour – good.

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

The principal and senior leaders have established an agreed approach towards understanding, and meeting, the needs of students with an autistic spectrum condition. This has helped to improve staff morale and to foster a

shared sense of purpose. Staff feel involved in the changes and understand how they are improving students' learning. Senior leaders have an accurate picture of the quality of teaching across the school. They monitor lessons regularly and give helpful feedback to staff on how teaching and learning might be improved. Areas for improvement are linked to teachers' appraisals and to their future professional development.

Several improvements have been made to the curriculum which are having a positive impact on students' learning. The amount of teaching time provided in the week has been increased. Older students have a curriculum map which shows how their courses of study lead on to further education, work or training. Personal, social and health education themes have been introduced across the school. The school has registered as an examinations centre which will enable more students to sit GCSE examinations. Classes have been organised to have fewer students and groups contain students with more compatible needs. Senior leaders recognise that further work is needed to extend curriculum planning for some subjects and to complete agreed policies, for example for literacy.

Safeguarding procedures are robust and there are appropriate levels of supervision on the school site.

The governing body has completed training on its role and receives more detailed information on students' achievement. It is in a better position to understand and challenge the school's performance. The Disabilities Trust has a clear vision for the school and has successfully restructured the school's staffing.

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

- Ensure that there is a clear curriculum framework in place – good
- Improve the effectiveness of safeguarding procedures – good
- Improve the impact of leaders at all levels on raising achievement – good
- Meet all the national minimum standards for residential special schools – this no longer applies since the school is now registered for day students only.

### **External support**

The school continues to benefit from a satisfactory range of external support. Staff particularly value the training and advice given by a local authority literacy team. A neighbouring secondary school has provided support for the curriculum, for example by offering students facilities to sit GCSE examinations and to study science in the school's laboratories. An educational consultant has helped the school develop and review its action plans.