

Serco Inspections
Cedar House
21 William Street T 0300 123 1231
Edgbaston Text Phone: 0161 6188524
Birmingham enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk **Direct T** 0121 683 3260
B15 1LH www.ofsted.gov.uk **Direct email:** antony.grace@serco.com

15 November 2012

Ms D Gerring
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 November 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 31 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

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – good

One newly qualified teacher may 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 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 second monitoring inspection on 13–14 November 2012

Evidence

The inspector observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, senior leaders, staff, a group of pupils from Key Stage 4, parents, the Chair of the Governing Body and a representative from the local authority.

Context

Since the previous monitoring inspection, the deputy headteacher has left and the former assistant headteacher has been appointed as the new deputy headteacher. Four teachers and one teaching assistant have left. Two new teachers and three teaching assistants have joined and three more teaching assistants have been appointed from the start of next term. The Chair of the Governing Body resigned just before the end of the summer term and a new Chair is in place.

Achievement of pupils at the school

The improving quality of teaching is beginning to have a positive impact on pupils' progress, particularly in Key Stage 3. The school does not yet have data to demonstrate progress over time. However, most pupils' books and other work show that their progress has accelerated since the previous monitoring inspection. In the majority of lessons observed, pupils made steady progress. Pupils responded willingly and often enthusiastically to what they were asked to do. They persisted with their learning even when the task was difficult or included aspects of work that they did not usually like doing. Many showed increased levels of concentration on their work compared to what was observed during the previous visit. In the best lessons, pupils of all different abilities learnt new concepts or skills. Pupils are having more suitable and more interesting experiences as part of their timetables, including working away from the school site, which is helping them to make better academic progress and develop their personal and social skills. An improved curriculum in Key Stage 4 is starting to help pupils to achieve at a higher level.

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

- improve achievement for all pupils – satisfactory

The quality of teaching

Teaching has improved. Although some weaknesses remain these are considerably fewer. During the inspection little inadequate teaching was observed. Staff have higher expectations of what pupils can achieve and they are conveying these expectations well to pupils. Teachers are making appropriate use of the much

improved assessment data, which indicate the levels at which pupils should be learning, to plan their lessons thoroughly. Most lessons observed had a suitable structure, a reasonable level of challenge for pupils of different abilities and careful planning that ensured that pupils made steady progress in their learning. Staff gave pupils encouragement but also corrected their errors and misconceptions so that they were able to learn what was planned. The best taught lessons had a high level of challenge and teachers supported pupils to try new experiences or to extend their thinking. The impact of well-targeted professional development and support for staff is evident in these improvements.

Teaching assistants are generally confident, with a range of skills, and work well as part of the classroom teams. Sometimes, however, teachers do not check how well pupils are progressing when they are working with teaching assistants. This means that they cannot intervene quickly enough if pupils are struggling.

The learning environment has improved. Pupils' work is displayed in all parts of the school. The usefulness of these displays is enhanced by the use of symbols. Better use of signing and symbols is also improving the quality of teaching and pupils' learning.

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

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

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils have adapted well to the new, more demanding ways in which they are being taught and the new experiences they are having. Many are relishing the increased independence they have to make choices and to organise themselves. Older pupils, in particular, value the greater level of responsibility they have been given and understand how they are playing an important part in improving the school. Pupils believe that the school has improved considerably since the previous monitoring inspection. Recently, the head boy and head girl gave a presentation to the governing body outlining these views. Pupils have also interviewed candidates for teaching posts and attended a staff training day to support the development of new topics.

The headteacher has rightly identified the need to further improve the way in which staff manage more challenging behaviour and to support pupils in managing their own behaviour. These developments are at an early stage so cannot be evaluated, but plans are sensible. There is currently a lack of analysis of trends and patterns in behaviour. The headteacher understands that this aspect is underdeveloped and much needed in order to assist the school in seeing where and when most incidents occur.

Pupils' attendance is similar to that at the time of the previous inspection. Many pupils attend very well but a few do not. Importantly, the headteacher, assisted by governors, has drafted a new attendance policy, which emphasises the need for all pupils' attendance to be high so that they can learn well. Responsibilities for acting on poor attendance are not yet clear enough.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

The headteacher's positive, determined and measured approach is having a clear impact on improving the school. The improvements are recognised and welcomed by staff, pupils and parents. The two other senior leaders are rising to the new challenges that their roles present. Together, the senior leadership team have an accurate understanding of the quality of teaching and know where emerging strengths and remaining weaknesses lie. Staff are responding well to the increased expectations that their work is always of high quality. They are taking more responsibility for developing their own skills, and for leading aspects of whole-school work, such as annual reviews and liaison with parents.

Leaders' monitoring activities increasingly lead to well-targeted action. For example, the school put into place regular teaching of phonics (letters and the sounds they make), then leaders observed lessons to see how good the teaching and learning were. They concluded that staff needed more training to improve their teaching in this area and that pupils needed to be grouped differently, so took appropriate action. Observations of phonics during the inspection found some well-organised and well-planned sessions in which pupils were making reasonable progress.

The new assessment process is well thought out and sensible. Appropriate attention has been paid to ensuring that staff understand how to assess the levels of pupils' work accurately. The school now has a clear baseline from which it can measure improvement. The progress tracking system is comprehensive but also straightforward. Suitably demanding targets have been set for all pupils in English, mathematics and science.

The new aspects of the curriculum are very positive. Pupils are thoroughly enjoying their 'enrichment' days, where they are following a wide range of courses. These experiences are already having an impact on pupils' confidence and ability to concentrate for extended periods of time. As pupils gathered in the foyer to go home on the second day of the inspection, there were excited discussions about abseiling, drumming, a horticulture course and soup-making. The headteacher has not yet begun to assess and track the impact of these courses on pupils' achievement, but is aware of the importance of doing so.

Parents' views of the improvements in the school are positive. Parents spoken to during the inspection felt welcomed in the school and said that their children were making definite progress.

Since the previous monitoring inspection the governing body has thoroughly scrutinised its roles and responsibilities and has reorganised itself accordingly. Governors are well focused on the improvement priorities and their own roles in this process. During meetings they are asking some appropriate questions and challenge leaders where they think there are weaknesses, but also offer to help to put these right. The Chair of the Governing Body has spent a great deal of time in school, getting to know it thoroughly, and her presence is welcomed by staff and pupils. Other governors have also spent time in school, both supporting and monitoring. Governors' monitoring of the school's progress is strong. Importantly, all their monitoring activities focus clearly on the difference that the school's actions are making to the outcomes for pupils.

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

- improve the school's capacity to sustain improvement – good

External support

The local authority has a clear and accurate view of the school's improvement. The support provided has had a good impact on important aspects of improvement, particularly in assessment practices and the quality of teaching. The support it gave to the governing body following the previous inspection helped governors to find a suitable resolution to the problems that they were experiencing. The local authority's monitoring both of the school's work and the impact of its own support is thorough and support is adapted well according to the school's needs.