

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

17 January 2013

Mrs C Wirth  
Headteacher  
Severn View Academy  
Bisley Old Road  
Stroud  
Gloucestershire  
GL5 1NL

Dear Mrs Wirth

### **No formal designation monitoring inspection of Severn View Academy**

Following my visit (with Mark Lindfield, Her Majesty's Inspector) to your academy on 15–16 January 2013, 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 a monitoring inspection carried out in accordance with no formal designation procedures and conducted under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. The inspection was carried out because the academy's predecessor school was judged to be a school causing concern.

### **Evidence**

The inspectors observed the academy's work and scrutinised documents including the academy's plans for improvement, information on pupils' attainment and progress, and the summary self-evaluation document. The inspectors visited 13 part-lessons including small group sessions for teaching letters and the sounds they make, (called phonics). The two part-time teachers in the Early Years Foundation Stage were not observed teaching. Meetings were held with the headteacher, staff, groups of pupils, the Chair of the Governing Body and representatives of the sponsors. Informal discussions with parents and carers took place.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time:

The academy is making reasonable progress in raising standards for all pupils.

## **Context**

The Severn View Primary Academy opened in September 2012 on the site of the predecessor school. The academy is much smaller than the average-sized primary school. Nearly all pupils are White British and few come from minority ethnic backgrounds. The proportion of pupils known to be eligible for the pupil premium (additional government funding for pupils eligible for free school meals and those in the care of the local authority) is higher than most other schools. The proportions of pupils that are supported by school action, school action plus and those with special educational needs are around the average.

A substantial proportion of the academy's staff are on temporary contracts, including the headteacher and the deputy headteacher. Most of the current staff transferred from the predecessor school, but there have been several changes since the academy opened. One part-time teacher has left the school and been replaced. The Key Stage 1 leader is currently seconded to work in another school until the end of the academic year. Consequently, a teacher has been redeployed to teach the Year 2 class and a newly qualified teacher has been appointed to teach part time in Key Stage 2. The special educational needs coordinator and the English subject leader have taken on their responsibilities recently.

The governing body has only recently been appointed and held its first meeting in December 2012.

## **Achievement of pupils at the academy**

The academy's assessment information shows that standards in reading, writing and mathematics are rising in most year groups and that increasing proportions of pupils are securely at the levels expected for their age. The rate of improvement is not consistent for all classes and groups of pupils because the quality of teaching is too variable. The academy has identified rightly the need to improve girls' progress in reading and writing, and to increase the number of more-capable pupils that are on track to attain the higher levels. Inspection evidence confirms that progress is stronger in Key Stage 2 and that pupils are increasingly on track to make at least the progress expected given their different starting points. The academy's tracking system and pupils' work in books show that pupils in Year 6 are currently on track to achieve results that are broadly in line with the average in reading, but below in writing and mathematics. Despite the improving picture only just over half of the Year 6 pupils are on track to make the progress expected in their writing across Key Stage 2. This is due largely to historical underachievement that predates the academy and a significant proportion of pupils in the year group having additional learning needs. Pupils in the current Year 2 are set to attain broadly average results in mathematics, but below average in reading and writing. Around a third of pupils in this year group have special educational needs. Visits to lessons confirm that

significant gaps remain in pupils' understanding of place value, this was evident in a Year 2 mathematics lesson.

The academy has utilised the pupil premium to fund smaller teaching groups in Key Stage 2 and provide pupils with free access to the breakfast club. These actions have made a positive difference and have begun to close the gap between their attainment and that of all the pupils. The school's assessment information shows that most Key Stage 2 pupils in receipt of the pupil premium are currently on track to make better progress than expected.

Pupils that are supported by school action and those with special educational needs are increasingly well supported in lessons. This is because teaching assistants have been reorganised to support specific pupils at the time they need it most. Individual support plans set targets to improve pupils' literacy and numeracy skills as well as their physical and emotional development. Their progress is tracked carefully and compared against similar pupils nationally.

The early reading skills of younger pupils are developed appropriately. They are supported in choosing a suitable book by a well-organised book band system. When reading to an adult, weaker readers are beginning to use their knowledge of the sounds letters make to decode unfamiliar words. While older pupils report they enjoy reading, some girls in Year 4 found it difficult to name different authors.

### **The quality of teaching**

There have been some improvements in the quality of teaching across the academy, but teaching remains variable. While a substantial proportion of teaching is good, particularly in Key Stage 2, there are inconsistencies in the pace of learning, teachers' knowledge of subjects and the clarity of pupils' learning objectives. Recently, teachers have changed the way they plan lessons and this has affected how specific knowledge and skills are taught. Occasionally, teachers set out to cover too many objectives and do not make it clear enough what individuals are expected to learn. In these lessons, pupils' progress slows and they do not achieve as much as they should by the end of the lesson. In most other lessons, teachers identify and share their learning intentions with pupils and explain what a good piece of work will look like. Where pupils make more rapid progress, this is because the learning intentions are based on careful assessments of what pupils have learned in previous lessons and adapted precisely to meet their needs. Consequently, the pupils understand clearly what they are expected to achieve by the end of that lesson.

The teaching of early reading is improving, but is also uneven. There are good-quality sessions led by both teachers and some knowledgeable teaching assistants. These sessions are helping to raise standards in reading, such as a well-sequenced session where the teaching assistant challenged pupils well. Her good subject knowledge was demonstrated using practical tasks to revise previous letter sounds before introducing new ones and practising how to sound out words containing the new sounds. Occasionally, sessions lack the pace necessary and pupils make more

limited progress. In these sessions, staff lack knowledge of the subject and pupils do not have enough opportunities to apply their phonic skills to their writing. The academy's leaders have already identified these weaknesses and planned appropriate training for staff. The academy increasingly promotes pupils' enjoyment of reading through well-organised, comfortable reading areas. In lessons, pupils sit enthralled by a story because the teacher brings it to life with expression and props.

Teaching assistants provide support which is increasingly well matched to the needs of individual pupils, particularly disabled pupils or those with special educational needs. The improving quality of adult support has contributed to their improved rates of progress. Some variation remains in the way teaching assistants check the progress that pupils have made and feedback to the teacher. Pupils know the level that they are working at and can recite their individual targets in mathematics and English. Nevertheless, the approach is not a consistent one and pupils receive too many additional targets in lessons, through marking and in pupil discussions. This confuses many of them as to which next steps they need to take to improve their work.

The academy's curriculum is meeting pupils' needs more effectively by providing interesting opportunities for pupils to practise literacy and numeracy skills. For example, younger pupils have developed their vocabulary when baking bread and older pupils have written the biographies and diary entries for Victorians. In mathematics, more-capable pupils have practised their calculation and problem-solving strategies to produce quotes for new windows and benches. A local artist has worked with pupils to create ceramic leaf plates and an intricately decorated totem pole for the school grounds.

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

Pupils are positive about the improved behaviour in the playgrounds since the academy opened. Teaching assistants now supervise the playground at lunchtimes and move around the different play areas interacting with children well. Pupils report that they appreciate the range of activities on offer at lunchtimes and the chance to choose from quiet or more physical activities.

Pupils are keen to make a positive contribution to the life of the school. During the monitoring inspection, the vast majority of pupils spent time in assembly thinking about friends and relatives, and demonstrating their consideration of others. They listened attentively and participated keenly in a role play in front of the whole academy. Pupils report that developments to the curriculum have increased the opportunities they have to engage in dance, participate in map work and learn about other faiths and cultures through prominent displays about Diwali. These broader learning experiences are developing their cultural understanding adequately.

In those lessons seen, teachers and teaching assistants managed pupils' behaviour well so that most pupils were keen to learn and applied themselves to their work

with sustained concentration. The very positive relationships between staff and pupils contribute to pupils' enjoyment of school and improving attendance.

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

The academy's leaders have driven improvements, but this requires a stronger focus on raising standards further so that all pupils achieve as well as they should. The headteacher has a very clear vision for the academy that is endorsed fully by the other staff. Leaders track the progress that pupils make with increasing confidence and have begun to report how well different groups of pupils achieve over time. However, the English and mathematics reports do not use the same indicators so it is difficult for leaders to compare pupils' achievements between the subjects in every indicator. Plans for improvement are suitably informed by the outcomes of regular monitoring activities. The records of leaders' visits to lessons lack comment on the quality of learning for different groups of pupils. Leaders have set clear priorities for improvement. The academy has begun to produce a summary of its self-evaluation. While this document is in a very early draft form, currently it draws on a limited range of evidence to inform judgements.

The changes in staff and leadership responsibilities have placed additional demands on the academy's leaders. Nevertheless, the improving standards across the school demonstrate that the academy has adequate capacity to sustain further improvement. The headteacher has met with each teacher to agree objectives to improve their performance. Staff have assessed themselves against the Teachers' Standards and identified any training needs they may have.

The governing body has been established recently so to date members have not monitored the work of the academy or agreed performance objectives with the headteacher. Consequently, they are not yet making a big enough difference to driving improvement. The members understand their responsibilities clearly and have been frustrated by the time it has taken for them to begin their work. They have begun to meet more frequently to make up for lost time. The governing body's plans to recruit a substantive headteacher are well advanced. At the time of the monitoring inspection, the academy's systems for checking staff and volunteers met current safeguarding requirements.

### **External support**

Good partnership between the sponsor and the academy staff means that staff value the support available. A mathematics specialist has provided training for the mathematics subject leader, and an information technology specialist has audited provision and subsequently advised on improvements. However, it is too early to gauge the difference that the support has made to improving teaching and learning. The sponsor has evaluated the academy's effectiveness and set clear priorities for its future improvement. The regional director for education has visited monthly and supported the headteacher in implementing new management and communication

systems. His assistance has eased some of the additional demands on the headteacher.

### **Priorities for further improvement**

- Increase the amount of good teaching to raise pupils' attainment so that girls make good progress and a greater proportion of pupils reach the higher levels by:
  - ensuring that all teachers plan and set a manageable number of learning objectives and targets that are matched carefully to pupils' capabilities
  - ensuring teachers move learning on swiftly in every lesson and check that all pupils understand the next steps they need to make in their learning in each lesson
  - increasing staff confidence and knowledge of letters and the sounds they make so that 'phonics' is taught consistently well.
- Improve leadership at all levels so that it makes a greater difference to the quality of teaching and raises standards further by:
  - implementing a programme of monitoring so that members of the newly formed governing body check the academy's work rigorously and hold leaders to account
  - ensuring that records of monitoring evaluate the progress that different groups of pupils make within lessons, particularly when observing mixed-age classes
  - increasing the accuracy of the academy's self-evaluation by taking account of a wider range of evidence to inform the judgements.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State for Education, the Chair of the Governing Body and the Academies Advisers Unit at the Department for Education. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Ian Hancock  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**