

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 311 5373  
**Direct F** 0117 315 0430  
**Direct email:** jo-anne.harwood@tribalgroup.com



25 January 2013

Andy McBurnie  
The Cottesloe School  
Aylesbury Road  
Wing  
Leighton Buzzard  
LU7 0NY

Dear Mr McBurnie

### **Requires improvement monitoring inspection visit under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 to The Cottesloe School**

Following my visit to your school on 25 January 2013, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report on the findings of my visit. Thank you for the help you gave me and for the time you made available to discuss the actions you are taking to improve the school since the most recent section 5 inspection.

The visit was the first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in October 2012. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

#### **Evidence**

During the visit, meetings were held with the headteacher and senior leaders, members of the governing body and two representatives from the local authority. The new school improvement plan was evaluated and documentation about the performance management and professional development of staff was scrutinised. The headteacher also took the inspector on a tour of the school to discuss developments to improve teaching and learning.

#### **Context**

Since the section 5 inspection the acting headteacher has been appointed as the new headteacher of Cottesloe School.

#### **Main findings**

The headteacher has communicated effectively and with great passion a vision for rapidly driving improvement, with much higher expectations for students' progress

and staff performance. The headteacher is using his links with two outstanding schools to support the improvement plans for Cottesloe. The headteacher, senior leaders and governors are stating clearly and firmly that standards must rise and there must be greater accountability at every level of leadership. A new, energetic pace of change is emerging. This is already being recognised by parents who are expressing their appreciation about the new headteacher's appointment and his swift communication with them about raising expectations.

The headteacher and senior leaders have responded quickly to the areas requiring improvement. They have devised a new school improvement plan to help leaders and other staff understand the strategic priorities for the school. The plan has precise targets for each area for improvement and clear success criteria to measure impact. It identifies clearly how leaders are taking more responsibility for improving teaching. Despite this, a few of the dates for checking impact are too far ahead. More regular and systematic review points are needed.

Senior leaders are starting to overhaul teaching and develop a positive climate for developing best practice. This is reflected well in the high quality work completed so far to review comments on lesson observation forms, train observers in giving precise and developmental feedback, and a revised, more robust appraisal system.

The governing body is forthright in its vision for how the new headteacher has to enable Cottesloe to become a good school within the next two years and how, in the new performance management system, all leaders will be similarly held to account. Senior leaders and governors are undertaking a full review of allowances within the teaching and learning responsibility structure. The governing body is planning to include more frequent reports from middle leaders at governor meetings. Governors are currently developing a better understanding of nationally expected progress data to test the impact of teaching against students' progress.

An external review of governance has not yet been undertaken. However, governors have begun to audit their skills to determine their training needs. The Chair of the Governing Body has made connections with national leaders for governance and is planning additional training for governors.

With clear direction from the new headteacher, the senior leadership team and governors have begun to take effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection.

Following the visit to the school, HMI recommend that further action is taken to:

- set more frequent check points in the school improvement plan to test out how well actions are securing improvement

- broker an external review of governance to support the governing body's own skills audit
- ensure that the governing body use the Ofsted survey report, *School governance: Learning from the best* to develop how governors hold all leaders to account for improvement.

Ofsted will continue to monitor the school until its next section 5 inspection.

### **External support**

The local authority has recently started to work with the school to address the specific areas requiring improvement from the recent inspection. There has been limited work with the governing body to complete an external review of governance either with the local authority, by brokering support with a partner school, or by a Local Leader in Education. Both school improvement advisers recognise an urgent need to offer additional support to make certain that the school development plan is quickly securing improvement. A summary of four issues has been drawn up indicating how eight days of support by the local authority will be used. This document lacks sufficient detail about raising achievement and lacks specific time-bound targets for the local authority to evaluate whether the school is improving quickly enough. There is much greater scope for the local authority to audit governors' skills and plan training for the governing body.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Buckinghamshire.

Yours sincerely

Joanna Beckford-Hall  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**