

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  
**Email:** matthew.parker@tribalgroup.com

15 March 2013

Mr T Phipps  
The Headteacher  
Bower Grove School  
Fant Lane  
Maidstone  
Kent  
ME16 8NL

Dear Mr Phipps

### **No formal designation monitoring inspection of Bower Grove School**

Following my visit with Steffi Penny, Her Majesty's Inspector, to your school on 26 and 27 February 2013, and my subsequent visit on 15 March 2013 to the two satellite provisions based in West Borough Primary School and St Augustine Academy, 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 carried out in response to two complaints made to Ofsted which raised serious concerns. The complaints were deemed to be qualifying complaints and Her Majesty's Chief Inspector decided that an unannounced inspection of the school should take place to follow up the whole-school issues that were raised. Inspectors sought to establish whether:

- safeguarding procedures are adequate, including the response to pupils presenting challenging behaviour
- suitable adjustments are made to behaviour management procedures according to the pupils' needs and disabilities
- staff are suitably trained and able to seek advice and support when required
- leaders and the governing body are effective in monitoring and evaluating policy and practice for behaviour management and safeguarding within the school.

### **Evidence**

Inspectors observed lessons, playtimes, lunchtimes and other aspects of the school's work. They spoke to pupils and scrutinised documents, including 12 case studies.

Inspectors took account of the on-line questionnaire (Parent View). They also met with you, the headteachers of the two mainstream schools where the satellite provisions are based, staff, the Chair of the Governing Body for Bower Grove and one other governor, and a representative from the local authority. The lead inspector also spoke to the local safeguarding officer. Observations and discussions took place at Bower Grove and at the satellite provisions.

Having considered all the evidence, I am of the opinion that at this time the procedures and policies to safeguard children and young people meet requirements.

Pupils' well-being is seen as a priority by staff. Incidents are dealt with appropriately and record keeping is thorough, particularly for older pupils. There is careful monitoring of all types of behaviour in the main school and satellites by the senior team, and this is separately and very effectively scrutinised by representatives from the governing body, including parent governors. As part of their effective monitoring, members of the governing body carry out visits to the main school and to the satellites. As part of the visits they make sure they seek the views of pupils. The headteacher ensures that information about Bower Grove's policy and practice is published on the school's website and is therefore fully accessible to parents and carers.

Staff are well trained and seek advice and support from leaders and colleagues and from other agencies when necessary. Staff have received suitable child protection training, which is complemented by extended training on behaviour management and physical intervention. Staff felt confident that they were able to raise any issues or concerns, particularly with the behaviour team, members of the senior team or governors, and that these would be acted upon. The recent introduction of three student support coordinators in the main school has been effective in providing additional support for pupils with some of the most complex needs. These coordinators are increasingly involved in day-to-day procedures to keep pupils safe, for example following up any pupil's absence promptly if no information has been provided by the family. Inspectors also observed their effective work in helping pupils to settle when they arrive in school and to provide an alternative choice to the playground at playtimes. In the satellite bases pupils have the option of spending time in the satellite accommodation or in the main part of the schools during breaks and lunchtimes. The lead inspector observed pupils making this choice at lunchtime. Some pupils had collected their lunch from the main school canteen. The atmosphere was calm and some pupils opted to eat together and chat, including with friends from the main school, whilst others opted to eat alone.

In lessons in Bower Grove School, there is usually a calm atmosphere and pupils are motivated to work hard. They are enthusiastic about the work they produce. Inspectors observed a wide range of interesting lessons, including some high-quality study of *Macbeth*, with older pupils and skilled work on developing phonic skills (the sounds letters make) with some of the younger pupils. Pupils are keen on the wide range of activities on offer at the school and were quick to tell inspectors how much

they enjoy coming to school, although a few would like more challenging work. Similarly, the vast majority of pupils were positive about the support and opportunities they had in the satellite provisions. Where there was an example of a pupil feeling less well supported, the staff at the satellite were taking this seriously and working closely with the pupil to try and resolve the difficulties. In lessons in the satellites pupils are given different amounts of support according to their needs. They have some discrete lessons and mentoring within the bases, but over time pupils spend increasing amounts of time learning in the mainstream classes. In the lessons observed, pupils from the satellite bases were included well in the main class teaching and support was available as needed. They were engaged and confident to ask and answer questions and worked well alongside their classmates. Some pupils were successfully accessing mainstream lessons independently.

The school and satellite environments are well looked after and pupils' work is displayed with pride in most areas. There are a few rooms where the environment is less welcoming. A few pupils' statements of special educational needs state that these pupils should have access to a designated place to withdraw to help them calm down. In the special school and primary satellite there are rooms allocated for this. In the secondary satellite base, although there is no designated room for pupils to use for quiet, calm time, there is plenty of space and a range of rooms that are used for this purpose. The lead inspector observed one pupil accessing the satellite classroom area to successfully continue their work in a calmer environment.

During the inspection, relationships between staff and pupils were observed to be positive. When pupils were struggling to cope in certain situations, staff used the lowest possible levels of intervention. During the lessons observed, a few pupils chose to have some time away from the class, taking themselves to one of the seated areas within the school. This was managed extremely well by staff and gave the pupils an opportunity to calm down whilst also making sure that they were supervised and safe. During the inspection, a situation arose when a pupil was struggling to behave appropriately in the playground. Inspectors observed the pupil sitting having a story read to him in the separate small room available. This helped him to calm down and prepared him to join the next lesson. In the satellite bases pupils have the opportunity to request time in the base if they are struggling in a mainstream lesson. During observations one of the pupils opted to do this. The same expectations for work were in place within the base as they had been in the main class. The support given enabled the pupil to return successfully to the main class after a short while. Some pupils find the 'focus' days in the academy difficult to cope with as the days have different timetables from usual. The satellite staff have not always made it clear enough to parents and pupils what they can offer as an alternative or to support pupils on these days.

There is a well-established reward system to support pupils in making the 'right' choices about how they will behave. This is well understood by most pupils and the immediacy of rewards is adapted appropriately according to pupils' levels of understanding and age. The reward system runs alongside sanctions which escalate

appropriately from verbal or visual warnings to the final stage which requires a pupil to miss part of their playtime. The policy for the use of physical intervention when pupils are at risk of harming themselves or other people or are damaging property is in line with recommended guidance. Staff are fully aware of the policy and how it works in practice. Pupils' views, observations and records corroborated that this type of intervention is used as stated in the policy. Pupils' behaviour improves quickly over time. Fixed-term exclusions are used sparingly and usually to provide time to make adjustments to provision so that pupils can succeed when they return to school. Very few pupils are excluded more than once. Rewards and sanctions within the satellites are adapted from Bower Grove policies so that they are also in line with the mainstream schools' policies. Individual approaches are taken for some pupils who need more help. This includes, for example, having additional reward charts as well as being part of the whole school reward systems in the primary satellite and receiving one-to-one mentoring support in the secondary satellite. Records are detailed but, at times, the range of provision to support pupils' behaviour is not brought together in a single plan, making it more difficult to evaluate.

Around the schools, pupils were observed to behave sensibly. They were suitably supervised for their age and needs, without being too heavily chaperoned. This strategy helps to develop pupils' independence and reduces their reliance on staff support in order to behave appropriately.

The school's safeguarding policies are in line with current government guidance and include reasonable adjustments relevant to the pupils' needs and disabilities. Staff are fully conversant with the policies. The headteacher and senior team work effectively with other agencies when it is apparent the level and type of support available at the school is not meeting a pupil's needs. Pupils' statements are reviewed if necessary and action is taken, sometimes with interim arrangements being put in place until a more permanent arrangement can be established. Effective school monitoring systems mean that records are checked and cross-referenced within the main school and satellites. Any incidents are reviewed and investigated appropriately, with amendments made to pupils' behaviour support plans as needed. In the case studies reviewed by inspectors, this process involved parents or carers and, when appropriate, the pupils themselves and other professionals. The separate system for recording the behaviour of younger pupils, while still being suitably detailed, is less easily analysed than the system for pupils in Year 6 and above.

I hope that you have found the visit helpful in promoting improvement in your school. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Janet Thompson  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**