

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 5359

**Direct F** 0117 315 0430

**Direct email:** Christina.Bannerman@tribalgroup.com

21 March 2013

Mrs E Lake, executive headteacher  
Mrs H Horsley, head of school  
Benfield Primary School  
255 Old Shoreham Road  
Portslade  
Brighton  
East Sussex  
BN41 1XS

Dear Mrs Lake and Mrs Horsley

### **Special measures monitoring inspection of Benfield Primary School**

Following my visit to your school on 20 March 2013, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings. Thank you for the help you both gave during the inspection and for the time you made available to discuss the actions which have been taken since the school's recent section 5 inspection.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in November 2012.

#### **Evidence**

During this inspection, meetings were held with the executive headteacher, the head of school, the chair of the strategic action group of the governing body, a representative of the local authority and the deputy headteacher. The local authority's statement of action and the school's improvement plan were evaluated.

#### **Context**

The previous headteacher resigned and left the school soon after the section 5 inspection. The associate headteacher, who had been seconded to the school at the time of the inspection, has since become head of school. A headteacher from an outstanding local school has taken on the role of executive headteacher.

The local authority issued the board of governors with a warning notice in February. Subsequently, the Chair of the Governing Body resigned. A new chairperson was elected this week. The governing body has been restructured. A new committee has been set up to monitor the progress of the school while it is deemed to require special measures.

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

The executive headteacher and head of school are determined to improve the school as quickly as possible and they have made a very positive start. They have drawn up a well-focused plan of action that tackles all the weaknesses identified at the time of the inspection. Timescales in the plan are realistic and targets are linked to those in the local authority's statement of action. However, costings are not included in the plan so it is difficult for school managers to assess the financial impact of planned improvements. The actions scheduled for this term have been completed on time and there is already evidence of some improvement in the quality of teaching and learning. School leaders are mindful of the pace of change required and of the pressure that this can create for staff. They plan developments for each half term carefully, ensuring that actions are spread across working weeks and that individual staff are not overburdened. Staffing has remained stable so far and senior leaders report that teachers and teaching assistants have reacted positively to the training and support given.

The governing body responded quickly and decisively to the warning notice issued by the local authority. Significant changes have been made to the way that the governing body operates. The newly formed strategic action group has a clear role in monitoring the progress of the school. Governors from this group visit the school frequently, attend meetings with the local authority and check on the progress of the priorities in the school's improvement plan. Other members of the governing body also visit the school more often. For example, most governors visited classes during a recent 'Governor Week' to see developments in the teaching of writing for themselves. A comprehensive schedule of training has been planned for the governing body. This is helping governors to increase their knowledge and understand their role in challenging and supporting the school.

School leaders value the support they receive from local authority officers and consultants. The strategic commissioner from the local authority liaises with the executive headteacher and the head of school to ensure that external support meets the school's needs. Nevertheless, the local authority's statement of action requires improvement. Although the plan sets clear, challenging targets for the school, the

persons from the local authority responsible for leading or taking actions are not clearly identified and there is no overall timescale for their involvement.

Following the monitoring inspection, the following judgements were made:

The local authority's statement of action is not fit for purpose.

The school's improvement plan is fit for purpose.

The school may not appoint newly qualified teachers before the next monitoring inspection.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Brighton and Hove City Council. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Melanie Knowles  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**