

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 5323  
**Direct email:** suzy.smith@tribalgroup.com

13 June 2013

Mrs E Maxted  
Headteacher  
Temple Grove Academy  
Friar's Way  
Tunbridge Wells  
Kent  
TN2 3UA

Dear Mrs Maxted

### **No formal designation monitoring inspection of Temple Grove Academy**

Following my visit, with Michelle Winter, Her Majesty's Inspector, to your academy on 12–13 June 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**

Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMIs) observed the academy's work, including several lessons, playtimes and two assemblies. Some lesson observations were carried out jointly with the headteacher. HMIs scrutinised documents, such as minutes of meetings and academy plans. They met with the executive headteacher, and the headteacher. They looked at pupils' work and held discussions with staff, governors, parents, the academy's sponsor and pupils.

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

The academy is not making enough progress in raising standards for all pupils.

## **Context**

This larger than average-sized primary academy is sponsored by the Temple Grove Schools' Trust. Its work is supported by the Loughborough Federation. The headteacher joined the predecessor school in September 2012 and then continued as headteacher when the academy opened in January 2013. The executive headteacher contributes part-time. The majority of staff have continued from the predecessor school. The academy is due to be formally launched, with a new uniform, in September 2013. Most pupils are White British. The proportion of pupils on the academy's register of special educational needs is above average. About twice the national average proportion of pupils are known to be eligible for free school meals.

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

Children enter the Nursery with attainment below age-related expectations. By the end of the Reception Year, many pupils do not reach age-related expectations in reading and writing, but do better in other areas of learning.

Since the academy opened, pupils' progress in Years 1 and 2 has begun to improve, especially in reading and mathematics. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 read confidently to HMIs and many used their knowledge of phonics (linking letters and sounds) securely when sounding out unfamiliar words. The academy's work to improve reading, and provide better books for pupils, shows some impact. However, there remain significant gaps in Key Stage 1 pupils' learning, particularly in writing.

In Key Stage 2, pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics also shows some improvement since the academy started. However, pupils do not make enough progress in writing, particularly in Years 4 and 5.

Throughout the academy, pupils often struggle with technical aspects of writing, such as forming sentences, using correct grammar, punctuation and spelling. They do not always apply their understanding of phonics when they write. Their work is sometimes neat, but not always. In mathematics, pupils do a suitable range of work, though this is not consistently demanding. Sometimes too many worksheets are used, which can restrict pupils' thinking.

Pupils' attainment is well below average throughout the academy, as it was in the predecessor school. Senior staff predict that results at Year 6 will remain low in 2013 and 2014, especially in writing, albeit with some improvement expected in 2014.

The progress made by pupils known to be entitled to free school meals is below that of their classmates. The same applies to disabled pupils and those identified with special educational needs. The gaps are not yet closing. Boys and girls generally

progress as well as each other, except in reading, where boys' achievement, although improving, is not as good as that of the girls.

The school does not systematically check pupils' achievement in the subjects beyond English and mathematics. Pupils' attainment in these subjects, in the examples seen by HMIs, was low.

### **The quality of teaching**

Teachers are working hard and receiving some helpful training. As a result, the academy has established more consistent approaches to teachers' planning, the teaching of reading, including guided reading (which was weak in the predecessor school), and behaviour management. For the most part, teachers provide clear explanations to pupils. The relationships between staff and pupils are very positive and pupils want to learn. Many lessons are better focused; one pupil aptly commented that teachers are 'stricter on learning'. In a well-paced, mathematics lesson, Year 2 pupils enjoyed working independently on carefully structured multiplication tasks and made good progress. Skilled questioning by the teacher helped them think for themselves.

Despite positive developments, too much teaching still requires improvement and is not improving quickly enough to redress the pupils' underachievement. In particular, work set for pupils in lessons across the school is insufficiently challenging. It is not closely enough matched to their needs. Too often, pupils all do the same, or very similar, work, which can be undemanding. Their personal targets are seldom referred to. Pupils sometimes have to sit for too long listening before starting their work.

In writing lessons, teachers try to give pupils stimulating starting points for writing, but there is too little focus on developing pupils' technical writing skills. For example, in a Year 6 upper set for writing, pupils enjoyed the work, but the expectations and pace were too slow and pupils made repeated mistakes (such as the incorrect use of capital letters). In a Year 2 lesson, pupils made some progress in improving sentences but were held back from doing better because opportunities to add extra detail and more advanced vocabulary were missed for those pupils who were ready to do so.

Teachers' marking is reasonably thorough. Teachers sometimes write useful comments which help pupils to improve their work. However, too often, basic errors are not corrected and are then repeated by pupils.

Teaching assistants are proactive in helping pupils, including disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, to stay focused in lessons. However, their work is not well focused on helping pupils achieve specific learning targets.

Lesson observations in this inspection focused mainly on English and mathematics. These subjects over-dominate class timetables. Short visits to lessons in other subjects, and scrutiny of pupils' work, indicate that the teaching in these subjects is unchallenging. Teachers have very little guidance to help them pitch the lessons correctly. Some lesson time is not used productively enough, especially towards the end of the day, as at the predecessor school's inspection.

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

Pupils' behaviour has improved since the academy opened. New rules and systems have been warmly welcomed by pupils, parents and staff. One pupil summarised what they see as the fairness of the new arrangements: 'If you don't follow the rule, you get help to understand it.' Pupils say that teachers are kind. They feel safe and well looked after and are respectful and considerate to each other in and out of lessons. Pupils say that bullying is rare and reducing, which is supported by the school's records and parental comments. The academy has made some fixed-term exclusions for occasional serious misbehaviour.

Attendance remains below average. Where pupils are persistently absent, staff follow this up carefully.

In assemblies observed, pupils were pleased to be rewarded for behaving and working well. Their behaviour was quiet and compliant. Opportunities for the pupils to reflect and develop their social, moral, spiritual and cultural development were, however, missed. There were no opportunities for all the pupils to participate actively, through singing together, for example.

Pupils enjoy their playground games together, some of which are started by the staff on duty. Pupils are respectful and use each other's names courteously. Staff usually deal with any playground problems well. However, some younger pupils report that occasionally, midday supervisors do not take their problems seriously enough.

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

The academy trust, governors and senior staff have begun to do what the academy most needs, which is to raise aspirations significantly, believing that the pupils can achieve really well in a wide range of activity. This is exactly right. There is clear leadership; the titanic commitment to the academy and its community is palpable. Staff have responded positively. There is a very genuine determination to improve the pupils' life chances. Some improvements can be seen. However, the academy came into being quickly and, as yet, work on achieving these excellent aspirations has not been well or coherently managed. Improvement is patchy. Parents who met with HMIs were not clear about what difference was being made by the academy.

Governors have been carefully recruited to provide a useful range of expertise and are hugely committed. However, they are not yet sure enough how to hold the

academy to account, and to ask the right searching questions of senior leaders. Nor do they contribute sufficiently to writing and monitoring the academy improvement plan. Their terms of reference, and the extent of their delegated powers from the academy trust, require further clarification.

The academy improvement plan lacks precision in explaining what needs to be done, by whom, and in what timescales. It does not have clear evaluation and accountability arrangements. Key improvements, such as those needed in teaching, management and the curriculum, are not targeted or planned in enough detail. The long-term part of the plan lacks any significant detail about how the aspirations are to be reached. Hence the improvement of the academy has been limited. An 'actions and impact' form was presented to HMIs separately from the improvement plan, emphasising the disjointed nature of management activity.

The academy's curriculum is weak and poorly led. Very little attention is paid to subjects beyond English and mathematics. For instance, rather than ensuring pupils struggling in mathematics receive sharply focused support, senior leaders instead decided to increase significantly the time given to mathematics, and English, for all pupils, without clear enough purpose. This squeezes all the other subjects, restricting their potential contribution to pupils' achievement in English and mathematics. Most subjects have no leader. Consequently, teachers have little subject guidance and standards of pupils' work across the curriculum, as seen by HMIs, are low. Some teaching, in music and physical education, comes from external providers, including Kent Music. The quality of this provision is not checked by the academy. There are, however, now more after-school clubs available, which parents and pupils like.

Senior leaders make regular checks on the quality of teaching in English and mathematics by observing lessons. They have correctly identified some improvement but overall they have judged teaching to be better than it is. They do not focus their lesson observations, and feedback to teachers, sufficiently on how much progress is made by all of the pupils, which is the main determinant of how the good teaching is. Only newly qualified teachers, and those the academy has profitably recruited from the Teach First scheme, receive sufficiently well-structured individual guidance on how to improve their work.

The special educational needs coordinator knows the pupils' circumstances very well and takes a very positive, caring approach to the work. However, the impact of the interventions the school makes for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs is not sharply evaluated. Pupil premium funding is appropriately targeted. However, the academy is not firmly evaluating how well this helps the pupils for whom it is given, nor is it reported on the academy website. Leadership within the Early Years Foundation Stage has insufficient impact. Recognising this, the academy plans new arrangements for September.

## **External support**

The academy sponsor is very committed and aspirational. However, suitable governance and accountability systems for the academy are not yet established. The Chair of the Academy Trust is well aware of this and is working towards it rightly clear that the academy needs to appoint a permanent full-time headteacher or Principal. Local authority support in checking and moderating teachers' assessments of pupils is well used by the academy.

## **Priorities for further improvement**

- Improve the quality of teaching systematically and quickly, so that pupils' underachievement steadily reduces. In particular, ensure that work is challenging for all pupils, and is set at just the right level for each pupil, to help them reach their next learning step.
- Improve the academy's management and governance, so that high aspirations for pupils can be reached by:
  - establishing working governance and accountability systems
  - significantly improving the school's strategic planning and its evaluation, so that it has clear and sufficiently detailed objectives, actions, timescales and accountabilities
  - establishing a suitable timescale and process for the appointment of a permanent headteacher or Principal
  - providing personal coaching for all teachers; evaluating teaching accurately
  - appointing subject leaders for every subject, with job descriptions which empower and hold them accountable for the standards in the subject
  - improving the management and monitoring of provision for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs.
- Improve pupils' attainment in writing, by developing a coherent and progressive system for developing their technical skills, including spelling, correct use of grammar and punctuation and sentence construction.
- Increase the depth and breadth of the curriculum, by planning and developing progressive and inspiring schemes of work in each subject, ensuring all subjects are given enough teaching time, and, where possible, working with partners such as Kent Music and developing the use of the lovely school grounds.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State for Education, the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Kent local authority and the Academies Advisers Unit at the Department for Education. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Robin Hammerton

**Her Majesty's Inspector**