

Tribal
1-4 Portland Square
Bristol
BS2 8RR

T 0300 123 1231
Text Phone: 0161 6188524
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk

Direct T 0117 311 5359
Direct F 0117 315 0430
Email: christina.bannerman@tribalgroup.com

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Mr Gordon Tillman
Headteacher
Oakley School
Pembury Road
Tunbridge Wells
TN2 4NE

Dear Mr Tillman

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Oakley School

Following my visit to your school on 1 July 2013, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report 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 March 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

During the visit, I held meetings with you, one of the assistant headteachers, members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority, to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. I also evaluated the school improvement plan. I welcomed the opportunity to tour the school and visit classes in both the primary and secondary sites.

Context

Although plans are in place for a re-structured middle management for the school, there have been no major changes to staff or the school's organisation since the section 5 inspection.

Main findings

Together with the members of the governing body, you have taken a number of positive steps towards tackling the areas for improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection. You have justifiably identified the need to review and re-structure the middle leadership of the school and rightly plan that in future judgements made about middle leaders' performance, and that of other teachers, will be informed by the progress made by pupils. The school holds accurate information on progress being made over time by individual pupils as well as groups. As a result, more challenging targets for pupil progress are being set on an individual and class basis. Whole school targets are not yet expressed clearly enough to enable all concerned to know what the school is aiming for over the next year and beyond. Teaching is still not consistently good but some effective work has been done to help teachers understand more clearly what is expected of them. Lesson plans are now linked well to the levels that each pupil is working at and aiming for. However, some lessons are still too focused on what pupils are going to do, rather than the skills and knowledge that they need to develop. This limits opportunities for teachers, or the pupils' themselves, to evaluate how much learning is taking place.

Governors have been extremely diligent in ensuring that they are more proactive in supporting the school's improvement and providing an increased level of challenge to you and your staff. Some very positive steps have been taken to ensure that the governing body is better informed, for example by tracking the progress made by a sample group of pupils or by joining members of the senior leadership team in lessons observations. The school's improvement plan remains one which was begun as a three year plan beginning 2012, although account has been taken of the areas for development identified at the recent inspection. It does not accurately reflect the positive steps that you have taken, and plan to take, to ensure that the school continues to improve. Targets and success criteria are not all expressed sharply enough and this currently limits the ability of staff to evaluate how well they are doing, and governors' ability to hold them to account.

Senior leaders, including the governing body, are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection. The school should take further action to:

- revise the school's improvement plan so that targets and success criteria for all aspects of school improvement are clearly expressed and therefore support governor monitoring more fully.

Ofsted may carry out further visits and, where necessary, provide further support and challenge to the school until its next section 5 inspection.

External support

The school has only recently begun working with the allocated local authority adviser. However, records of the most recent progress meeting indicate that key areas for improvement are being considered in some detail and that you are receiving useful guidance in how to address them. It is important that you continue to make full use of this advice.

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

Yours sincerely

Anne Duffy

Her Majesty's Inspector