

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 5323
Direct F 0117 315 0430
Direct email: Suzy.smith@tribalgroup.com



12 July 2013

Ms Klimek
Holne Chase Primary School
Buckingham Road
Bletchley
Milton Keynes
Buckinghamshire
MK3 5HP

Dear Ms Klimek

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Holne Chase Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 9–10 July 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 the fourth monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in March 2012. The full list of the areas for improvement which were identified during that inspection is set out in the annex to this letter. The monitoring inspection report is attached and the main judgements are set out below.

Progress since being subject to special measures – satisfactory

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – satisfactory

Newly qualified teachers may not be appointed.

This letter and monitoring inspection report will be posted on the Ofsted website. I am copying this letter and the monitoring inspection report to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Milton Keynes.

Yours sincerely

Ken Bush
Additional Inspector

Annex

- By December 2012, improve the quality of teaching and learning so that all pupils make at least satisfactory progress in reading, writing and mathematics by:
 - raising expectations of what all pupils can achieve, particularly boys and pupils with special educational needs
 - using assessment information to plan work that closely and consistently matches the needs and abilities of all groups of pupils
 - providing pupils with clear and regular verbal and written advice to help them improve their work rapidly
 - updating teachers' knowledge and skills in teaching phonics and in developing reading and writing skills across the curriculum
 - giving staff more opportunities to share and build on good practice.

- As a matter of urgency, generate greater capacity for sustaining school improvement by:
 - improving the skills of senior and middle leaders to rigorously monitor and drive improvement in the quality of teaching and its impact on pupils' progress
 - developing the skills of the governing body to promote rapid school improvement and to hold the senior leadership team to account.

Special measures: monitoring of Holne Chase Primary School

Report from the fourth monitoring inspection on 9–10 July 2013

Evidence

The inspector observed the school's work and scrutinised documents including the local authority's post-inspection action plan, minutes of the most recent review meetings and relevant safeguarding documents. The school's most recent monitoring records and assessment information based on the school's checks on pupils' progress were also considered, along with the unvalidated outcomes of recent Year 2 and Year 6 national tests. Learning sessions covering all classes in the school were observed, other than Year 5, who were away on a residential visit. These visits were all undertaken jointly with the headteacher or interim deputy headteacher. In addition to discussions with these two colleagues, the inspection team met with: four teachers; one of the recently appointed assistant headteachers; the newly appointed Chair of the Governing Body and his predecessor in the role; and the local authority officer responsible for monitoring and evaluating the school's progress.

Context

Since the previous monitoring visit, two assistant headteachers and two other teachers have joined the school. There will be further changes to the teaching staff for September 2013, but currently only one vacancy has yet to be filled.

Children in the two Reception classes and pupils in Years 5 and 6 are taught in single-age classes; pupils in Key Stage 1 and in Years 3 and 4 are taught in mixed-age classes.

Achievement of pupils at the school

The much-improved information about pupils' progress provided by the school indicates that over time, all year groups now make progress which is broadly in line with national rates and there is less variability between the achievement of different classes than was reported on previous monitoring visits. Most groups of pupils achieve as well as their peers in school, although the progress of those pupils with special educational needs, who are supported at school action plus, is slower than other pupils.

Progress has been slow in Year 6 where the legacy of weak teaching which these pupils experienced in the time leading up to the school requiring special measures has not been significantly rectified. The unvalidated results from the 2013 national tests show some improvement in attainment in reading and, notably, in writing, but a sharp decline in mathematics. Attainment at the higher Level 5 was similar to 2012

in reading, but much lower in writing and in mathematics. School leaders are aware that increasing achievement in all subjects, so that more pupils make good progress, especially, but not exclusively, for the Year 6 pupils that start in September, is a high priority.

The quality of teaching

Leaders have established a clear strategy to improve teaching, but the rate of improvement continues to be hindered by the numerous changes in the teaching staff, especially in Years 5 and 6. As a result, leaders have found it difficult to establish any great consistency in providing high-quality teaching, both within teams responsible for different age groups and across the school generally. However, newly appointed staff, in particular, have brought in some effective new approaches which are now being shared more widely; this development has been well received by staff generally.

Where teaching is strongest, teachers have high expectations of all pupils. This is shown in how they are provided with interesting tasks which require them to exercise a significant degree of independence, use and apply existing skills, and encourage them to take responsibility for their own learning. This was well illustrated in a Year 3/4 lesson where pupils made clear gains in their awareness of phonics (the sounds letters or combination of letters make) because the teacher provided a very clear structure for them to develop their skills, but did not over-direct them. Each pupil's programme of work was individually tailored to their needs.

Teaching of this quality was not typical of that seen during the monitoring visit, including in phonics sessions which, in some cases, lacked sufficient challenge for all pupils. Although planning is improving so that there is beginning to be a more consistent approach across age groups the focus is still largely on planning for teaching activities, rather than for pupils' learning. In a number of lessons seen during the visit, a significant proportion of pupils, and especially the more able, did not progress at a fast enough rate. This was because too much whole-class teaching was not well matched to the needs and abilities of different groups of pupils, not all of whom needed the lengthy explanations they were provided with before they commenced a task.

The quality of marking has improved over time, but there are still too many inconsistencies between that provided by different teachers. Some pupils are given clear guidance on how to improve, especially in literacy, but teachers do not always follow up and check that pupils have acted upon the advice given. Both the quality of marking and the use of targets in mathematics are underdeveloped, a point affirmed by the Year 6 pupils spoken to during the monitoring visit. They also reported that they had received little or no homework since they completed the national tests in May.

- Progress since the last monitoring inspection on the area for improvement relating to the quality of teaching – satisfactory
- Progress since being subject to special measures on the area for improvement relating to the quality of teaching – satisfactory

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils continue to behave well both in lessons and around the school. The Year 6 pupils spoken to confirm that the good behaviour seen by inspection teams on each monitoring visit is typical and that instances of poor behaviour are uncommon. They affirm, too, that the school is a safe environment and that bullying is rare. They were very complimentary about the positive impact made to the school by the present headteacher since she joined in April 2012.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

The headteacher has been instrumental in enabling the school to move forward steadily since requiring special measures. The many staffing and leadership changes have provided a significant challenge for leaders and the governing body, and have restricted both the pace and extent of improvement. However, the long-term vision for the school is sound and underpinned by a commitment to sustainable improvement based on high quality teaching.

Since the previous visit, there has been a notable increase in the frequency and rigour of the monitoring of provision, which has been undertaken by a wider range of leaders, although this has yet to make a significant impact on raising standards. The newly expanded senior leadership team of four have begun to make more regular checks on teaching and marking quality, and of the quality of pupils' work, although the focus is not always sharp enough about the outcomes of teaching as opposed to the process of teaching itself. Leaders' expertise in generating and analysing detailed pupil achievement information is increasing and innovations such as individual pupils' progress histories ('flight paths') provide an effective tool for identifying underperformance, and enabling quicker and more precise support where needed.

Leaders and members of the governing body have taken on board some of the points for development highlighted in previous monitoring visits regarding the shortcomings of the school improvement plan. The current model of the plan makes better use of the outcomes of the monitoring undertaken by leaders and is starting to identify how specific improvement policies work in practice. However, it still does not capture the relative balance of strengths and weaknesses clearly enough so that all governors and staff can see what the next steps should be to meet the points for improvement and what are the chief priorities.

The governing body is continuing to become more proficient in holding leaders to account. Scrutiny of the governing body minutes clearly indicates that governors are becoming more confident and skilled in asking searching questions, particularly about how well pupils achieve, although there is less evidence that they are aware of precisely how teaching needs to improve. They are continuing, also, to build further capacity to become increasingly effective through appointing new governors with specific skills and expertise. Almost all governor vacancies have now been filled.

The local authority school improvement officer has worked increasingly closely with the school since the previous monitoring visit and provided useful advice and support in a range of areas.

- Progress since the previous monitoring inspection on the area for improvement relating to leadership and management – satisfactory
- Progress since being subject to special measures on the area for improvement relating to leadership and management – satisfactory