

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

15 November 2013

Sara Bennion
Headteacher
Sheepscombe Primary School
Far End
Sheepscombe
Stroud
GL6 7RL

Dear Ms Bennion

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Sheepscombe Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 13 and 14 November 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 fifth monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in January 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 – good

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – good

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 Gloucestershire.

Yours sincerely

Jane Neech
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in January 2012

- Raise pupils' achievement in English and mathematics by:
 - ensuring that assessments of pupils' learning provide a reliable and accurate basis for measuring their progress and planning the next steps
 - making better use of learning time during the school day, ensuring that in afternoon sessions there is time to complete activities.

- Ensure that by January 2013 all teaching and learning are at least satisfactory and most good by:
 - making sure that the work planned meets the needs of all pupils
 - raising teachers' expectations of the quality, quantity and presentation of pupils' work
 - monitoring pupils' progress in reading more closely
 - routinely providing pupils with feedback about their achievements and next steps during lessons and through marking in books
 - sharing the features of good teaching.

- Develop the capacity of staff and governors to understand and use information about pupils' progress and school performance to bring about improvements to teaching and achievement.

Special measures: monitoring of Sheepscombe Primary School

Report from the fifth monitoring inspection on 13 and 14 November 2013

Evidence

I observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and had meetings with you. I met with a representative from the local authority. I talked to staff, pupils and parents and carers. You and I observed three teachers teaching. We completed a scrutiny of pupils' English and mathematics books. I had meetings with the English and mathematics subject leaders, and the leader for special educational needs. I analysed pupils' work with the mathematics subject leader. I had discussions with the Chair of the Governing Body and two other governors.

Context

You were appointed as headteacher from September 2013. You are a teaching headteacher and share the teaching of the Reception and Key Stage 1 class with another teacher. The three teachers in the school are part time. The two teachers who share the teaching of the Key Stage 2 class are employed for an extra half day each for a handover session. A new Chair of the Governing Body has been appointed. The number of pupils joining the school is rising. The school meets the governments' floor standards, which set out the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress.

Achievement of pupils at the school

The strongest performance continues to be in English. This is because teaching and assessment remain effective, particularly in Year 5 and Year 6 where pupils make good progress and produce work of a high quality. In the 2013 National Curriculum tests, pupils in Year 6 performed well when compared with pupils nationally. Pupils in Year 5 and Year 6 also make good progress and achieve well in mathematics. Some pupils in Years 2, 3 and 4 are starting to make good progress in mathematics, but as yet not everyone is catching up to where they need to be. The progress for these pupils needs to be accelerated.

Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs make good progress and achieve well because of the tailored support they receive. In the 2013 national tests, these pupils did better in English and mathematics than similar pupils nationally.

In Key Stage 1, pupils' progress in reading is being maintained. During the monitoring inspection I heard pupils read aloud from their reading books. They confidently used their knowledge of the sounds letters make (phonics) to work out unfamiliar words. Pupils showed a real enjoyment of reading and talked

enthusiastically about how the stories they were reading might end. This enthusiasm for reading is being well supported by even higher and clearer expectations from teachers in school, and continuing reading at home.

Pupils routinely have targets to support their progress in English and mathematics. In an English lesson, Year 5 and Year 6 pupils discussed high-level targets which challenged them to improve their work. For example, they selected which connective words they might add to a piece of work to achieve Level 5 in writing. At the start of mathematics lessons pupils practise calculations related to their personal targets. However, the analysis of pupils' work carried out with the mathematics subject leader showed that for Year 3 pupils, targets are sometimes set too low or set for too long, for example, repeating addition and subtraction calculations within 10. This means that some pupils are not being challenged sufficiently enough to accelerate their progress in basic skills in mathematics.

Progress since the last monitoring inspection on areas for improvement:

- Raise pupils' achievement in English and mathematics – good

The quality of teaching

In both classes in the school, class teachers are refining their planning to suit the mixed-age groups they teach. There is effective deployment of teaching assistants and adults to support individual pupils and groups. The teachers who share the teaching of the Key Stage 2 class have wisely used the opportunity on their handover day to divide the class into older and younger pupils for one English lesson. This means that each teacher focuses on a specific area of work. For example, the teacher teaching Year 5 and Year 6 pupils introduced a complex set of images, from a sophisticated book, to inspire the discussion with pupils about the possible genre they may wish to follow in their writing.

At the time of the previous monitoring inspection there was more work to be done to improve the consistency and quality of marking. Teachers now routinely build time into lessons for pupils to act upon marking comments from previous lessons. There is evidence in the books that pupils have 'had another go' or corrected errors. In the best examples, pupils write a response to the marking, explaining how they have arrived at the answer, for example to a mathematical question.

There are discernible improvements in the quality of teaching since the school was placed in special measures and since the previous monitoring inspection. Parents and carers say that the conversations they have with teachers now focus on the National Curriculum levels that their children are achieving or aspiring to achieve. Parents and carers appreciate the change, because of the emphasis on their children's learning. However, the school is aware that there is still more work to do

to improve all teaching, specifically in mathematics, to being routinely and securely good.

Over the period of the four previous monitoring inspections the school has improved the quality of activities planned for the reception children. The current part-time teacher is new to this age group. She has yet to get to grips with planning activities where children can select their own learning activities, matched to their interests, including using the outside learning environment.

Interventions for pupils who need extra help continue to be well matched to their needs. Parents and carers speak highly of this support for their children. The teacher leading this work ensures that each intervention has a baseline and exit criteria so that the progress of pupils can be accurately assessed. Pupils' achievements show that this area of the school's works continues to be successful.

Progress since the last monitoring inspection on the areas for improvement:

- Ensure that by January 2013 all teaching and learning are at least satisfactory and most good – good

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Staff report that, since September, the school feels 'calm and settled'. The arrival of a permanent headteacher has been a major influence in creating this stability. The new headteacher has built on the previous school leader's expectations, reviewed the behaviour policy with staff, and set out clear expectations. She expects everyone to focus on values, such as 'respect for others'. This means that pupils' attitudes towards learning, and towards one another, in lessons and at other times during the day, are often exemplary.

Governors report how impressed they are with pupils' behaviour during assemblies. Pupils' behaviour continues to be a strength and everyone is particularly welcoming to newcomers and visitors to the school. Parents and carers appreciate how the headteacher has continued to develop the 'inclusive nature' of the school.

There are new systems in place to check on pupils' attendance and lateness. Since September there have been no unauthorised absences or instances of pupils not being on time for school.

Progress since the last monitoring inspection on the areas for improvement:

- Ensure that by January 2013 all teaching and learning are at least satisfactory and most good – good

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

The governing body has wisely appointed a permanent headteacher who, since starting the post in September, is leading Sheepscombe Primary with drive, energy and a sense of purpose. She is building sensibly on the work started by previous acting headteachers, and so continuing with actions to tackle the areas for improvement identified at the previous section 5 inspection. She has rightly recognised that staff's understanding and use of information to check on pupils' progress are much improved, but is aware there is still work to be done to improve the quality of some teaching.

Since the last monitoring inspection the quality of subject leadership continues to improve further. English is very well led overall. The subject leadership, however, would be even better if the teacher responsible developed his understanding of early literacy further, thereby enabling him to make a greater contribution to school improvement in this area. At the time of the last monitoring inspection, the leader for mathematics was new to the role. She is getting to grips with leading the subject. She has produced an action plan and reviewed the school's calculation policy with staff. This means there is now a consistent approach to teaching strategies, such as how to teach subtraction. Feedback from a recent review of mathematics by the local authority with the headteacher highlighted some remaining weaknesses in the teaching of mathematics.

After an unsettled period since the section 5 inspection, staff are delighted to have a permanent headteacher. Staff now feel there is someone 'at the helm' leading the way. There is also a difference in the way staff approach their work. All staff view themselves as 'part of the solution' in addressing the areas for improvement. This is an important change and particularly relevant for the teachers leading English, mathematics and special educational needs. The system for checking how well teachers are performing has been tweaked in line with the Teachers' Standards and higher expectations of accountability since September.

The new Chair of the Governing Body has quickly 'taken up the reins'. Succession planning has been effective. Governors have completed an audit of their skills, which is informing how best to support and challenge the school's performance. Governors are now well informed and, as a result, knowledgeable about information relating to pupils' progress and how well the school is doing compared to schools nationally. They are fully supportive of actions being taken to address issues that remain in the areas for improvement identified at the previous section 5 inspection, such as making sure that all teaching meets pupils' needs and raises achievement.

Progress since the last monitoring inspection on the areas for improvement:

- Develop the capacity of staff and governors – good

External support

Since the previous section 5 inspection, the local authority has responded well to the school's needs by providing two successive acting headteachers who have made progress on the areas for improvement. The mathematics subject leader has welcomed the link with another mathematics subject leader. The local authority is very supportive of the new headteacher's actions to address the areas for improvement relating to aspects of teaching, for example, organising visits to other schools to share the features of effective teaching with staff from Sheepscombe.