

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  
**Email:** christina.bannerman@tribalgroup.com

13 February 2014

Mr Martin Clinton  
Executive Headteacher  
Istead Rise Primary School  
Downs Road  
Gravesend  
DA13 9HG

Dear Mr Clinton

### **Special measures monitoring inspection of Istead Rise Primary School**

Following my visit to your school on 11 and 12 February 2014, 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 gave during the inspection and for the time you made available to discuss the actions which have been taken since the school's previous monitoring inspection.

The inspection was the third monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in February 2013. 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.

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

The school is making reasonable progress towards the removal of special measures.

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

This letter and monitoring inspection report will be published 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 Kent.

Yours sincerely

Sheena MacDonald  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## Annex

### **The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in February 2013**

Improve the quality of teaching in Years 1 to 6 by:

- ensuring that teachers set work for pupils that matches the whole range of abilities in each class and maintains their interest, especially for more-able pupils
- ensuring that teachers' assessments of pupils' attainment in reading, writing and mathematics are accurate
- making sure teachers provide more opportunities for pupils to practise their skills in reading, writing and mathematics in different subjects
- ensuring that teachers check that pupils in Key Stage 2 know their targets in English and mathematics and how these targets can be achieved.

Increase rates of progress in Years 1 to 6 by:

- planning more effective support for those pupils for whom the school receives pupil premium funding
- raising teachers' expectations for what more-able pupils can achieve making sure that teachers' marking clearly identifies how work can be improved and providing opportunities for pupils to act on the teachers' comments.

Improve leadership and management by:

- increasing the capacity of senior and subject leaders to make accurate checks on teaching and provide clear feedback to teachers to help them improve the quality of their teaching
- ensuring that information from checks on pupils' progress is used to identify any dips in progress and is quickly followed up with effective action
- ensuring that school leaders at all levels take urgent and effective steps to improve communication with parents and carers, especially with regard to behaviour
- providing training for governors to improve their skills in checking on the school's performance and to ensure that the governing body consistently implements agreed procedures.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

## **Report on the third monitoring inspection on 11 and 12 February 2014**

### **Evidence**

I observed the school's work including attending an assembly, looking at pupils' books and observing the teaching and learning in 11 lessons. I scrutinised documents and met with the executive headteacher, head of school and the special educational needs coordinator. I also met with four members of the governing body, two representatives from the local authority and a teacher from Meopham Community Academy.

### **Context**

There have been several staff changes since the monitoring inspection in September. Five teachers left at the end of last term and have been replaced by four teachers, including two assistant headteachers.

### **Achievement of pupils at the school**

Pupils' reading, writing and mathematics skills have been slow to improve but there are positive signs that standards are rising and the rate of improvement is speeding up now. The assessment information gathered in December was disappointing with many pupils having made no measurable progress since the previous summer term. The results of the most recent assessments are more encouraging. Most pupils have made some progress and a few have made rapid progress. The improvements remain very variable between classes and it is worrying that the pupils who have made the slowest progress, particularly in writing, are in Years 5 and 6. There is still a long way to go before pupils are achieving as well as they should.

The pupils generally respond well in lessons: they readily discuss their learning when given the opportunity and are keen to contribute their ideas. When the objectives and learning steps for each lesson are shared with the pupils, they are becoming much clearer about what good learning will look like and know when they have achieved success. The use of individual targets and teachers' marking is still very variable. In some classes, but not yet all, targets are up to date, the pupils know what they are and can show examples in their books of where they have achieved them. Similarly, there are examples of pupils checking the teachers' marking and responding to the comments or added challenges. The quality of the work in pupils' books is beginning to improve but there remain differences between classes about what is acceptable in terms of quality, quantity and presentation. It is clear from the pupils' books that expectations about how much work pupils should be completing, and at what level, are often too low.

### **The quality of teaching**

Overall, the quality of teaching seen during this visit was better than in the last visit, and this is reflected in the pupils' improving skills. There is some consistently good

teaching in the Reception classes. Elsewhere, the quality is more patchy, but teachers are keen to improve and are benefiting from the coaching and individual support which is being provided. Lesson planning is improving because teachers have a clearer understanding of what pupils should be learning and there is a better match of activities to different abilities. There are more opportunities for pupils to talk about their learning and share their ideas. Teaching assistants generally provide valuable support in lessons and also contribute to the much more effectively planned activities to help individuals and small groups of pupils with particular needs.

The lessons which are less effective require improvement rather than being inadequate. In some of these lessons, although pupils are busy, the activity does not help them to achieve the learning objectives. In some lessons, everyone in the class starts at the same point with some added challenge at the end, if there is any time left, so the work is sometimes a little hard for the least able and too easy for the most able. Teachers are sometimes so focused on what they are doing that they do too much. They miss opportunities to let pupils show what they already know and understand, and there are still too many lessons where the pupils do not have enough time to complete work of sufficient quality or quantity.

Almost all teachers mark pupils' work carefully, and provide useful comments and guidance. In some instances, the teachers are working very hard on this, but there is very little evidence that pupils are expected, or given time, to respond. The use of targets to focus learning and drive improvement is improving but is still variable. Classrooms are much brighter and are well organised with valuable support materials on display. Around the school, pupils' work is celebrated. There are examples of teachers promoting learning across different subjects. During the visit, Phase 3 pupils were incorporating their knowledge of earth and space into interactive PowerPoint presentations. In Reception, teachers planned various learning activities around the book *The Tiger Who Came to Tea*. Children were excited to find the clues that the tiger was in school and this motivated them to learn about feelings, ask the tiger questions and draw a map of the tiger's movements.

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

Pupils are friendly and sparky. They wear the 'values' badges proudly, and can explain what the values represent and why they have been awarded them. Some also have peer mediator, play leader, pupil parliament and eco-warrior badges, and can explain what these mean. They speak out confidently in lessons and are able to talk about what they are learning. In assembly, they listened attentively to the lovely singing of the choir and showed their appreciation by applauding vigorously. They usually behave well and cooperate in lessons. Occasionally, some of the oldest pupils become a bit over exuberant, particularly when they have not got enough to do in lessons.

Attendance has been lower than average in the past and, although this was not scrutinised in detail during the visit, it is clear from information provided by the school that the attendance of some pupils continues to cause concern.

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

There is a lack of leadership capacity in the school due to the long-term absence of the deputy headteacher. Added to this, the assistant headteachers have been settling into their classrooms and are just starting to develop their leadership roles. Given these difficulties, the head of school is doing a very good job of managing the smooth running of the school and moving it forward. She has implemented a tightly focused plan which highlights the aspects identified by the inspection last February as requiring the most improvement. Several teachers from Meopham Community Academy have worked alongside teachers to improve their practice, particularly in mathematics and in Phase 1. The positive impact of this can be seen in the improving quality of teaching. The rigour of monitoring activities such as checking on the quality of teaching, scrutinising pupils' books and assessing pupils' reading, writing and mathematics skills has improved. There is still scope to sharpen up the targets in this plan so that everyone, including governors, can easily evaluate whether the improvement strategies are successful.

There have been improvements in the systems for identifying, tracking and supporting pupils with disabilities and special educational needs, and other groups of pupils such as those eligible for pupil premium-funded support. The impact of support activities has been evaluated and, where it is not successful, the activities have been stopped. Some support has been improved through training so that there is evidence now of real improvement, for example, in pupils' reading skills. The improvements are recent so that the evidence is not yet strong to say whether gaps in achievement are closing.

Governors are more knowledgeable than previously. They understand the information being provided and can see that pupils' achievement is not improving quickly enough. They spend time in school to see for themselves what is happening 'on the ground'. The Chair attends the termly local authority progress meetings and this helps to make sure that governors understand the current situation. Governors are better able to ask the right sort of question. However, their scrutiny and evaluation role is underdeveloped because they do not regularly examine the progress the school is making in addressing the key weaknesses. The lack of specific and measurable milestones also reduces their effectiveness. Governors are keen to develop better communication and relationships with parents and carers. A parents' forum has been set up and the results of the parents' questionnaire last term showed that parents and carers, particularly those whose children are in the younger age groups, are more positive about the school now.

The school will become an academy, but this will not happen until the next academic year.

## **External support**

The local authority improvement adviser is providing valuable support to strengthen leadership and support the head of school. He will increase the frequency of his visits in the absence of the deputy headteacher and while the assistant headteachers are developing their roles and leadership responsibilities. The authority is also carrying out its monitoring and evaluation role effectively through the termly progress meetings. The school is benefiting greatly from the partnership with Meopham Community Academy.