

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

27 February 2014

Bradley Taylor  
Headteacher  
Chiltern Gate School  
Verney Avenue  
High Wycombe  
HP12 3NE

Dear Mr Taylor

### **Special measures monitoring inspection of Chiltern Gate School**

Following my visit to your school on 25 and 26 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 fourth monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in December 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.

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 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 Buckinghamshire.

Yours sincerely

Hilary Macdonald  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Annex**

### **The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in December 2012**

- Improve the quality of teaching to good or better so that pupils make at least good progress by:
  - ensuring that teachers make clear to pupils what they will learn in each lesson so that they, and pupils, can see how well the pupils have achieved by the end of the lesson
  - ensuring that the work set in lessons matches the different needs and abilities of all pupils within each class and encouraging them, where possible, to learn to work with less support
  - providing teachers with the right learning resources
  - making sure that teaching assistants are clear about their roles and how they can support pupils' learning.
  
- Improve leadership and management, including governance, by:
  - establishing effective systems for checking how well the school is doing, including the quality of teaching, and pupils' progress and behaviour
  - ensuring that the outcomes of these checks are analysed, and strengths and areas for improvement identified and acted upon through effective planning for improvement
  - ensuring that governors are well informed about all aspects of the school's performance and check closely on the improvement the school is making.
  
- Improve assessment by:
  - ensuring that pupils know how well they are doing and what their next steps in learning should be
  - improving systems for recording the work of pupils, particularly those who are following the Early Years curriculum.
  
- Ensure that the pupil premium is used effectively to support pupils' learning and that this is closely checked by governors.
  
- Build upon the work started to improve the planning of what should be taught and when, and extend the opportunities for pupils to improve their reading skills.

## **Report on the fourth monitoring inspection on 25-26 February 2014**

### **Evidence**

The inspector observed many aspects of the school's work and met with the headteacher and other senior leaders, members of the governing body, a group of parents and carers, and a representative from the local authority. Informal conversations were held with pupils throughout the visit. The inspector considered a wide range of documentary evidence, including information relating to pupils' rates of progress and levels of attainment. Part of a school assembly and a lunchtime were seen, and 11 lessons were formally observed by the inspector accompanied by a member of the senior leadership team.

During this monitoring inspection, neither the systems for recording and assessing pupils' learning, nor systems and approaches to improving pupils' reading, were examined in detail as they had been judged effective at earlier visits.

### **Context**

Since the last monitoring visit, an extended leadership team has been developed. This group comprises the senior leadership team, three teachers and a teaching assistant representative. The extended leadership team meets weekly and the senior leadership team meets briefly on a daily basis. A business manager has just been recruited and the governing body has successfully elected new members.

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

A sense of optimism and ambition about what pupils can achieve pervades the atmosphere at Chiltern Gate School. Regardless of their role, all staff make critical contributions to pupils' emotional development and well-being and, in turn, this contributes to pupils' ability to make good progress with their communication skills, behaviour and in the range of subject areas. Since the previous monitoring visit, numerous links have been made with sports coaches and clubs, and pupils now have enhanced opportunities to experience activities such as rugby, skipping and trampolining. Pupils are improving their fitness, their overall physical health, their sports skills and their enjoyment in physical activity.

Systems for recording and monitoring pupils' achievements are used consistently by all staff. Workbooks continue to provide a precise record of each pupil's learning and progress, and staff and pupils alike are proud of what these books demonstrate. Pupils of all ages, in all classes, talk about what they are learning and what they need to do to succeed as well as how they are getting on. For example, the youngest children in school reflected on how successful they had been during a picture exchange communication lesson and chose a symbol to represent this.

Teachers and pupils frequently talk about prior learning as well as how a concept or topic will be developed further over time and what each individual pupil's next steps are. In this way, pupils are gaining a deeper understanding and appreciation of their own learning.

Achievement data are collected and analysed regularly. This information is highly accurate, and senior leaders and class teachers know exactly how much progress each pupil is making and what their next targets should be. Currently, around two thirds of pupils are making good or rapid progress in English, mathematics, science, and physical, social and emotional development. Whenever a pupil has made less than expected progress, consideration is promptly given as to how best to help further and new approaches or additional support implemented.

### **The quality of teaching**

Teaching has significantly strengthened since the previous monitoring inspection. There is a high level of consistency in terms of what teachers do, and how, as laid out in the teachers' handbook. Teachers know what is expected of them and the criteria that senior leaders will use when making judgements about the quality of teaching. High-quality professional training has continued with teachers attending courses in communication systems, reading and writing. Most teachers have benefited from the opportunity of visiting other schools and establishing a peer observation arrangement. As well as this, senior leaders provide extensive mentoring and advice to staff in their teams, both formally and informally.

In lessons, activities are carefully planned to capture pupils' interests, and dull lessons are consigned to the past. Tasks are individually tailored so that all pupils can experience challenge and success, and for the most part, these individual adjustments are made appropriately. The current topic of 'Homes and Castles' is proving very popular and pupils have enjoyed making 'homes' out of many materials, including construction equipment and junk modelling. In one very effective lesson, for example, older pupils compared and contrasted Tudor and modern homes using non-fiction books and new computers.

Teachers and teaching assistants ensure pupils know what they are learning about, and provide plentiful opportunities for pupils to tackle and complete tasks on their own as well as with peers or with adult support. During this visit, the balance of high and low levels of adult direction, support or encouragement was proportionate to pupils' needs. As a result, pupils are making good progress. Most teaching assistants work seamlessly with class teachers, and many are confident and capable of teaching groups independently. Teaching assistants are well informed about the content of each lesson, hold the same positive expectations for pupils' behaviour and participation in learning, and know and apply the agreed sanctions and rewards systems.

The school and individual classrooms are now better presented than previously and are more enticing places to be. Levels of resourcing are still being enhanced, particularly for information and communication technology. Teachers have access to resources of sufficient quality and quantity.

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

Most pupils are happy most of the time! Generally, they are willing and eager to communicate with, and be welcoming towards, visitors to their classrooms, particularly to members of the senior leadership team who know the pupils very well. At the previous monitoring inspection, while pupils' behaviour was typically observed to be good, the ways in which behaviour was managed varied too much from class to class and at lunchtimes and playtimes. This has been addressed, with new initiatives and approaches recently introduced. At lunchtime, pupils are able to look at the food on offer and make their own choices about what they would like to eat. Communication is well supported whenever necessary. Pupils sit with their peers and enjoy this less formal time of day. Lunchtime clubs and activities provide further opportunities for pupils to pursue activities that interest them and engage in positive behaviours.

Praise for pupils' efforts and achievements are integral to all lessons. A new system of 'merits', linked to the behaviour charter, has just been introduced. Pupils revisited school rules, particularly regarding behaviour during school assembly, and began the new term highly motivated to work towards various rewards. Very occasionally, adults misjudge the best way to manage more challenging behaviour and subsequently this leads to a loss of learning time. In one lesson, potentially challenging behaviour was astutely managed when the teacher, rightly, decided to allow a pupil to hold a desired object in order that he could then concentrate on the learning task. Furthermore, the teacher capitalised on the opportunity for the pupil to communicate meaningfully as, on request, he signed to obtain the desired object. Calm rooms are used to ensure that pupils who need more space can do so and so that disruptions to learning are minimised for other pupils in the class.

The work of the speech therapists in developing and extending pupils' abilities to concentrate on a task and manage their own behaviour for growing periods of time is conspicuously successful. At a previous monitoring visit, the group of pupils now in Years 5 and 6 were observed to be passive and inattentive. On this visit, the very same group of pupils demonstrated huge enthusiasm for learning, participated actively and with evident enjoyment, and in the 'attention' session led by speech therapists, the pupils watched and listened with sustained concentration and responded with joy.

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

The leadership of Chiltern Gate School is evidently strong. The headteacher and deputy headteacher have high expectations of all members of the school community including themselves and the pupils. These high expectations are combined with energy, vision and a resolute determination to ensure Chiltern Gate becomes an outstanding school in due course. Other members of the senior leadership team, newly introduced extended leadership team, staff, governors and parents share the same ambition and levels of commitment.

The effective systems for checking how well the school is doing evidenced at the previous monitoring inspection have continued. Senior leaders have an exact understanding of the strengths of the school and what needs to improve further. The governing body has been further strengthened by new membership. Governors bring highly relevant skill and expertise to their roles, willingly undertake training and are able to hold senior leaders rigorously to account.

Work to review and improve the curriculum is well under way. New topics are being carefully selected to capture pupils' interests and the exact content of each subject carefully tailored to precisely meet the needs of Chiltern Gate pupils. Extra-curricular trips, activities and clubs are being extended to provide pupils with the widest range of experiences possible.

Additional (pupil premium) funding for those pupils known to be eligible for free school meals continues to be used for horse-riding lessons, horticultural therapy, occupational therapy and additional help with English and mathematics. Current data indicate that this group of pupils has made particularly good progress with developing their listening skills but less good progress than their peers in improving their speaking and writing skills. Additional support is being carefully monitored and a further evaluation is planned in order that senior leaders and governors can be confident that maximum benefit is achieved from this additional funding.

While not an area for improvement identified at inspection, the headteacher has worked hard to increase parental engagement in school. Many initiatives, including being interviewed on the local Muslim radio station, parental workshops and a highly successful Christmas bazaar, are contributing to the sense of the school as a united community.

## **External support**

The local authority is on hand to provide advice and guidance when requested, but has lacked a level of expertise in special education over some time. Effective links have been made with other special schools, and these have made a strong contribution to raising the quality of teaching, and very particularly to strengthening teachers' skill and confidence in accurately assessing pupils' levels of achievement.

Communication from the local authority regarding funding for additional pupils has not been timely or clear enough to enable the school to move forward with its planning confidently. Problems with the school roof are also proving slow to resolve and further damage to the school hall has recently occurred. As a result, the school cannot put up displays or use an overhead projector, both of which are important.