

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 3115307
Direct email: rachel.evans@tribalgroup.com

28 February 2014

Mrs S Porter
Headteacher
Lodge Farm Junior Mixed and Infant School
Willenhall School Sports College Campus
Furzebank Way
Willenhall
WV12 4BU

Dear Mrs Porter

Special measures monitoring inspection of Lodge Farm Junior Mixed and Infant School

Following my visit to your school on 27 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 recent section 5 inspection.

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

Evidence

During this inspection, I held meetings with you, your senior leadership team, the Chair of the Governing Body and a representative of the local authority. I reviewed the local authority's statement of action and the school's improvement plans. I also undertook observations of parts of five lessons, spoke to pupils in lessons and heard some of them read. In addition, I reviewed the data that the school has on pupils' reading ages and you and I undertook a walk around the school together.

Context

Three substantive teachers left the school during the February 2014 half term. Three new teachers have been appointed on temporary supply contracts.

The quality of leadership and management at the school

Since the inspection in October 2013, leadership and management of the school have not improved. Little has changed at senior level and it is not clear where the necessary challenge to move the school forward will come from. The headteacher is very hard-working and committed, has the support of staff and is engaging well with parents and carers but she is inexperienced; this is her first headship. The governing body currently in place comprises the same members who oversaw the decline of the school into special measures. The local authority officer supporting and challenging the school is the same officer attached to the school prior to it moving into special measures. The local authority statement of action indicated that an additional, experienced governor would be appointed to the school to strengthen its oversight, but this has not happened. The statement of action also considered replacing the governing body with an interim executive board (IEB) but the local authority has deferred this decision pending the outcome of a second review of governance following the inspection in October 2013.

The authority has brokered additional support for the school from a local successful school and staff report that these links are proving beneficial. The local authority's review group has met twice to monitor the school's progress, revise the action plan and set revised targets. Teachers are receiving a range of training, including on how to moderate their own assessments of pupils' work and progress. Several initiatives are underway, but their impact as yet, on educational standards, is limited. The teaching of reading remains inadequate; there is no whole-school policy and there is no clear baseline of pupils' performance in reading. The school does have reading ages for pupils but this information is poorly presented so that it is neither useful as a management tool for senior leaders and governors nor as a guide for teachers to oversee the books pupils read and to plan reading sessions. The school devotes 30 minutes each day to guided reading but, in Key Stage 2, this time is poorly used. Each day, pupils spend most of the reading session carrying out low level, uninspiring activities that do not develop their reading skills. The school has an inadequate supply of reading scheme books and far too few high-quality books, across the range of fiction and non-fiction, to promote a love of reading or to support a vibrant and interesting curriculum.

Parts of the fabric of the school building are very tired and unkempt. The Early Years Foundation Stage areas in the school are cluttered and in need of a deep clean and some possible remodelling. The Early Years Foundation Stage outdoor area also needs updating: there is no cover for the Nursery area; there is a lack of high-quality equipment and staff report that parents and carers taking children to Key Stage 1 each morning walk through the Early Years Foundation Stage area, limiting the range of equipment that staff can put out first thing each day.

Attendance has improved but it remains too low. Persistent absence figures are improving.

Staff report that there have been significant improvements in behaviour although I saw too much low-level disruption in some of the lessons I observed.

Following the monitoring inspection the following judgements were made:

The local authority's statement of action is fit for purpose but its impact has so far been limited.

The school's action plan is not fit for purpose because the data used in the plan are not reliable or well presented.

The school may not appoint any more newly qualified teachers (NQTs) before the next monitoring inspection. The school already has three NQTs, appointed before the school went into special measures. One completes her probationary period at the end of this term; the others at the end of the summer term. As a matter of urgency, the local authority and school need to ensure that all three experience good and outstanding practice in other schools.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Walsall. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Angela Westington
Her Majesty's Inspector, Senior