

Tribal
Kings Orchard, One Queen
Street, Bristol
BS2 0HQ

T 0300 123 1231
Text Phone: 0161 6188524
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk

Direct T 0117 311 5323
Direct email: suzy.smith@tribalgroup.com



13 March 2015

Mrs S Matthews
The Executive Headteacher
Somerford Primary Community School
Draper Road
Christchurch
BH23 3AS

Dear Mrs Matthews

Special measures monitoring inspection of Somerford Primary Community School

Following my visit with Peter Clifton, Additional Inspector, and Dale Burr, Seconded Inspector, to your school on 11 and 12 March 2015, 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 second monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in June 2014. 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 Dorset and as below.

Yours sincerely

David Edwards
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in June 2014

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is consistently good or better by making sure teachers:
 - use information from assessments to plan suitable work that is not too easy or too difficult, and which sustains pupils' interest
 - encourage pupils to build up their skills and understanding quickly, particularly in writing
 - explain ideas clearly and check frequently that pupils understand what they are learning about
 - ensure that pupils understand the purpose of the tasks they are given and how they contribute to their learning
 - ensure that pupils use their literacy and numeracy skills in other subjects as they do in English and mathematics and adjust the work accordingly when not all pupils are learning well and give children in the Early Years Foundation Stage more chances to talk about what they are doing to develop their speaking skills
 - mark pupils' work accurately with clear guidance so that they know what they have to do to improve.
- Enable all groups of pupils, including the most and least able, to make good progress and achieve well by:
 - improving pupils' knowledge of number facts in mathematics so that they are better able to apply these skills when solving problems
 - making sure that the adults who support disabled pupils and those with special educational needs share information about the progress these pupils make with teachers so that they are able to build on these achievements further in class.
- Improve the overall behaviour and safety of pupils by:
 - making sure that pupils conduct themselves well in lessons and are enthusiastic to learn
 - improving rates of attendance so that it is at least in line with the national average by working more closely with pupils and their families to reduce absence.
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management, including governance, by:
 - ensuring that all leaders gather and share information about the achievement of different groups of pupils to compare rates of progress and tackle any underachievement
 - taking swift action if any groups are not doing as well as they should
 - ensuring that plans for English and mathematics include clear actions to raise pupils' attainment and that staff are held to account for achieving targets
 - making sure that middle leaders make regular checks on teaching and learning in their areas of responsibility

- ensuring that performance management procedures are used effectively to improve the quality of teaching.

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 second monitoring inspection on 11 and 12 March 2015

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work and scrutinised documents, including school improvement action plans and notes from governors' visits to the school. Meetings were held with the headteacher, the Chair of Governors, teachers, teaching assistants, senior and middle leaders, pupils from the school and a representative from the local authority. An inspector also met with a small group of parents and the behaviour of pupils was observed by inspectors during break and lunch times.

Context

One teacher left the school at the end of January 2015. Two non-teaching staff and another two teachers left at the end of February 2015. The three teachers have all been replaced. The Chair of Governors and one other governor resigned at the end of January 2015. A new, temporary Chair of Governors has been appointed. Two parent governor vacancies remain. The number of pupils on roll is stable at 427.

Achievement of pupils at the school

The most recent checks on pupils' learning indicate that underachievement is beginning to be successfully eradicated within the school. Children in the Reception classes are making particularly good progress because teachers quickly get to know children and their learning needs. Teachers keep a record of each child's achievement in the early years in a 'learning journal', which parents are also encouraged to regularly contribute to. Teachers use this information to identify children's next steps in learning. However, teachers acknowledge this practice is not fully embedded as the journals do not capture the learning and achievement of children in all areas of the early years curriculum. Teachers in Key Stages 1 and 2 also use information on pupils' achievement to inform their lesson planning and ensure the work they set is not too easy or too difficult. As a result, most pupils make good progress in lessons.

The regular training and professional development provided by the school have begun to increase teachers' confidence in providing for the broad range of pupils' learning needs, and especially the most-able pupils. As a result, pupils in Years 1 to 6 are now making sustained progress in developing their reading, writing and mathematical skills. Senior leaders now expect most pupils to achieve in line with pupils of the same age nationally by the end of this academic year, which is a significant improvement on last year's achievements. Staff now accurately identify the needs of disabled pupils and those with special educational needs. Clear lines of communication ensure all adults who work with disabled pupils and those with special educational needs regularly share information about the progress pupils are making with teachers. Disadvantaged pupils are similarly well provided for and have made rapid progress this year. As a result, the gap between their attainment and that of other pupils that existed in previous years has now closed.

The quality of teaching

The quality of teaching continues to improve. In lessons observed during the monitoring inspection, pupils were often learning well and no groups were making inadequate progress. Teachers who met with inspectors expressed confidence in the strong leadership provided by the headteacher and senior leaders. Teachers say the information they regularly receive from senior leaders is helping them to provide better for pupils' learning and understand the progress pupils make. One teacher summed up the views of all colleagues by saying, 'I have never felt as confident as I do now.' Teachers who are new to the school say they feel well supported by colleagues and receive constructive advice on how to improve their practice. Teachers regularly plan their lessons together in order to meet effectively the needs of all pupils' abilities. Where learning is at its best, teachers explain ideas clearly to pupils and check frequently on pupils' understanding. For example, in a Year 4 mathematics lesson, the teacher's questioning was carefully targeted at pupils in order to challenge or support their learning. It also gave pupils time to think and then share their ideas with one another. As a result, pupils gained a secure understanding in this lesson of how to calculate perimeter and area.

Adults know children's learning needs very well and provision is managed expertly in the early years. Improving pupils' speaking skills is a key priority. For example, in the Nursery class, children were excited to learn the story of *The Three Little Pigs*, as adults showed children how to maintain the correct tense in retelling the story. In a Reception class the teacher's high expectations of how children spoke was evident in the way she expected all children to answer her questions in full sentences.

Teachers make sure pupils exercise their literacy and numeracy skills in other subjects and not just in English and mathematics lessons. Teachers mark pupils' written work to a high standard and provide clear guidance so that pupils know what they have to do to improve. Teaching assistants work effectively under the direction of teachers and the support they provide to pupils is highly valued by them. In the best practice seen, teaching assistants work closely alongside pupils to support their learning and progress. Where support is not as effective, adults focus too much on ensuring pupils complete a task rather than on what pupils need to learn. Typically, teachers set high expectations for pupils and ensure no time is wasted moving between activities. They regularly check pupils' understanding through careful questioning that challenges, as well as supports, pupils to make good progress.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils' behaviour in and around school has significantly improved since the most recent inspection. The headteacher has successfully established a culture and ethos where good behaviour can now flourish. Leaders are working closely with external partners to focus on improving pupils' attendance. Surgeries take place every month to support families whose children do not attend regularly. Parents who spoke with inspectors said they have confidence in the headteacher and the work of the school.

The behaviour policy is rigorously implemented throughout the school. All adults take a consistent approach in managing pupils' behaviour and uphold the school's high expectations at all times.

In lessons, pupils are showing improved attitudes to learning because their teachers capture their interests and meet their learning needs well. Pupils who spoke with inspectors said behaviour in school was now much better. Pupils say they feel safe in school at all times. Safeguarding arrangements meet current requirements. The governing body carries out regular checks on safeguarding to ensure compliance. Pupils' overall attendance has improved and is now in line with the national average. Pupils' punctuality remains an issue. However, the school is using a range of support strategies to encourage pupils to arrive at school in good time. The school is working determinedly with parents in order to maintain pupils' good attendance and secure improvement where it is needed.

All parents who spoke with inspectors said they appreciated the stability in leadership the headteacher has brought to the school. Although there have been significant changes to staff in the past year, parents could see the improved behaviour in school and were pleased with the better progress their children were now making. Pupils were keen to talk to inspectors about their work. They have a good understanding of the marking system used in the school and most are given time to respond to their teachers' comments.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

Leaders and managers acknowledge there is still much to do to secure high standards for all pupils, and especially the most able. The strong and visionary leadership of the headteacher ensures all teachers maintain high expectations for what pupils can achieve. Morale amongst staff is now good because all say they feel supported and encouraged to contribute to school improvement. Teachers say they feel well supported by senior colleagues who are always willing to support them and demonstrate best practice. Senior leaders gather information about the achievement of different groups of pupils. Leaders then regularly share the information with staff, comparing rates of progress and identifying underachievement. Leaders' regular checks on the quality of teaching ensure any weaknesses are identified quickly and that teachers receive the professional development they need to improve. For example, support and training have been provided for middle leaders so that they too can make regular checks on teaching and learning in their areas of responsibility.

The governing body has yet to arrange an external review of governance in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved. The governing body has undergone considerable changes in personnel since the inspection and further changes are anticipated as the school moves towards becoming part of a multi-academy trust. However, an external review of governance remains a priority which needs to be arranged as soon as possible. The current Chair of Governors is also a National Leader of Education and is using his expertise to strengthen the role of middle leaders within the school. He is confident the executive

headteacher is exercising the necessary rigorous and aspirational leadership essential to bring about lasting improvements. Governors are fully involved in the process for monitoring staff performance in the school. They also meet regularly with the headteacher to check on the work of the school.

External support

The school is wisely drawing on the expertise of external partners and agencies in order to secure lasting school improvement. A local authority representative is working alongside senior leaders and governors to broker professional development for all staff. For example, the school is working closely with a nearby outstanding school to strengthen teachers' subject knowledge in English and mathematics.