

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



20 March 2015

Mr Andrew Hencken
Principal
The Mandeville School
Ellen Road
Aylesbury
HP21 8ES

Dear Mr Hencken

Special measures monitoring inspection of The Mandeville School

Following my visit with Cathy Tooze and Raminder Arora, Additional Inspectors, to your school on 18–19 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 third monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in October 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 not making enough 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 Buckinghamshire.

Yours sincerely

Christine Raeside
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in November 2013:

- Improve the quality of teaching, so that it is good or better in all subjects, by making sure that:
 - all teachers have the highest expectations of what students are capable of achieving
 - teachers ensure that work is accurately matched to the skills and abilities of all students throughout the lesson
 - work is regularly and accurately marked, so that students are clear how well they have done and what they need to do to improve
 - all teachers give students regular opportunities to be regular participants in lessons.

- Improve leadership and management, by:
 - involving all leaders and governors in a thorough review of the school's strengths and weaknesses, and using this information to implement a clear plan for improvement that includes challenging, measurable targets and timescales
 - organising the school's programme for checking the quality of teaching so that it is coherent and consistent, and brings about rapid improvements in teaching
 - ensuring that leaders of subjects, particularly English, mathematics and science, understand the strengths and weaknesses of their subject area, and take effective action to bring about rapid improvement in achievement and teaching
 - ensuring improvement plans are clear, have specific outcomes and include interim measures against which progress can be regularly evaluated
 - ensuring that the new interim executive board has a good grasp of data about students' performance and the quality of teaching, and holds leaders to account for the school's performance.

- Raise achievement, including the achievement of sixth formers, by:
 - sharing good quality and accurate information regularly with subject leaders and staff so that they understand how well all students and groups of students are doing
 - ensuring that lesson planning is based on what this information reveals about what students already know, and what they need to do to improve.

Report on the third monitoring inspection on 18 and 19 March 2015

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the Principal, the consultant headteacher, subject leaders, the Director of Education for the Buckinghamshire Learning Trust, groups of students, and the Chair of the Interim Executive Board.

Context

Since the last monitoring inspection, a permanent Principal has been appointed, taking up post in November 2014. The deputy headteacher has left the school and has not yet been replaced. One assistant headteacher has been on sick leave since January and another has resigned with effect from the end of this term to take up a promotion in another school. Two assistant headteachers have joined the school, with responsibility for mathematics and science. Three new science teachers have been appointed and will start after Easter. There are currently six teacher vacancies covered by supply staff. The Buckinghamshire Learning Trust has funded a consultant headteacher to work alongside the Principal for three days a week since the beginning of February 2015.

A new building has been completed, which will house a reception and administration area, as well as specialist accommodation for lessons in physical education and the performing arts. However, this is currently unfurnished and unoccupied, because no funding had initially been secured for internal fixtures and furnishing. This is expected to be resolved and the building operational by late April.

The school has been granted ministerial approval, in principle, to become an academy sponsored by the EMLC Academy Trust. An academy order is in place; however, a funding agreement has not yet been reached and this has delayed conversion to academy status, originally planned for January 2015.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

The school is in a weaker position than at its last monitoring inspection. Signs of improvement identified then have not been sustained or developed. The appointment of a new Principal has partially stabilised the leadership of the school, but capacity for improvement is limited by the current lack of a fully staffed and operational senior leadership team. In the short time since his appointment, the Principal has been heavily involved in the academisation process, but the delay and uncertainty associated with this has become a distraction and an obstacle to improvement. The Interim Executive Board (IEB) and Principal have held back important developments, such as the appointment of a Vice-Principal and the writing of a school improvement plan, in anticipation of the academy sponsor taking charge

with a preferred model. As this has not happened, the IEB has now, rightly, taken the decision to proceed with recruitment and a first draft development plan is in place.

There is currently no coherent approach to monitoring, evaluating and improving teaching. Strong assistant headteachers have been appointed to lead mathematics and science, but, with high staff turnover in these subjects, their time is, necessarily, devoted to teaching. Their capacity to check on and improve the quality of teaching and learning in their subjects is limited.

The Principal has responded quickly to gaps in safeguarding practice identified by an externally commissioned audit. For example, he has ensured that he and other senior leaders are appropriately trained in safeguarding and child protection, so that students have a named contact at all times if they feel at risk. He is working through other recommendations with appropriate urgency. Similar reviews, of health and safety, and special educational needs, also provide a clear platform for improvement, although they add to a lengthening list of priorities. Systems to improve behaviour are also under review. Students do not understand what the consequences for poor behaviour are, and report that teachers are inconsistent in how they apply the rules.

The new draft school improvement plan is detailed and addresses key aspects of the schoolwork under broad headings, such as 'Improve the quality of teaching'. However, it does not place a strong enough emphasis on behaviour, nor is it precise or specific enough in detailing what needs to be done to improve the school urgently.

Achievement of pupils at the school

The quality, quantity and presentation of work remain too variable. Students learn well in some lessons, but are let down badly in others. Expectations of what they can do differ too much from teacher to teacher. They draw the obvious distinction between some cover lessons, where they are given 'worksheets that are too easy and not relevant to the examination', and lessons where the teacher 'is passionate about his subject, and really cares about the grades you get'.

The contrast between girls' and boys' progress is marked. Although there are exceptions, boys' work is more likely to be underdeveloped, incomplete, or poorly presented. Teachers' expectations are not high enough to reverse this inequality; there is no established culture of students taking responsibility for their learning, for example by taking books home routinely to complete homework or by keeping detailed subject notes for revision. Students who are self-motivated (more often, girls) maintain good progress. Others (too often, boys) fall behind.

GCSE results in 2014 showed only very slight improvement on 2013. Results remain below the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum

expectations for students' progress and attainment at the end of Year 11. Results were particularly disappointing for boys, for students known to be eligible for free school meals, and in mathematics. While English results appear better overall, this masks significant underachievement by boys in English too, where their progress was below national expectations and far behind that of girls. Sixth form results improved slightly, with more students achieving pass grades in AS- and A-level examinations. However, the significant numbers of students entering the sixth form without GCSE mathematics or English, or both, are not well served. The timetable allocation to this group is minimal and they have no confidence of improving their grades.

The quality of teaching

Teaching is not improving enough and some aspects have declined since the last monitoring inspection. Previous improvements in teachers' use of assessment information to plan better lessons have not been sustained. Where there is good practice, such as some detailed analysis of individual achievement in geography, it is not replicated across all subjects. Teachers do not plan well enough to meet the needs of different groups, such as students known to be eligible for free school meals, in some cases because they do not know who these students are.

There is no clear and sustained pattern of improvement in teachers' marking and feedback, even though this has been a priority since the last inspection. Current practice is better than at the beginning of the year, when an external review found marking to be weak and patchy. The Principal has had to insist on this recent improvement, however; it does not reflect an upward trend of better practice.

Teacher absence and vacancies are having a negative impact on learning. Students are disillusioned with long-term cover and point to gaps in their learning from a lack of skilled specialist teaching. The Principal is working tirelessly to recruit and appoint good teaching staff, with some success. However, until they are securely in post, learning continues to suffer.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Most students are courteous and well behaved. Between lessons, the school is generally calm and well ordered. However, too many lessons are interrupted by misbehaviour or suffer from some students' poor attitudes to learning. Teachers do not always know how to respond to challenging behaviour and a minority of students exploit this by disrupting others' learning.

Students are selective about how they behave for different adults. They do not always behave well for cover teachers, especially where the work set is too easy or does nothing to capture their interest. This is especially marked in science, where able students are marking time and underachieving.

Exclusions from school, although declining now, have risen, according to senior staff, because of a 'zero tolerance' approach. However, this was also reported to be the case at the last monitoring visit. The need for another crackdown indicates that improvements are not taking hold. Permanent exclusions since the last inspection have been very high.

Students feel safe at school and report that the Principal has taken a strong personal stand against bullying. They value assemblies focused on respectful relationships between young adults and how to avoid the risk of exploitation or harassment. They are respectful of one another's cultural and religious beliefs. However, they also report casual use of homophobic language and view this as a feature of school life to be tolerated. Some also view the early years of secondary school as a time to expect bullying or intimidation, which will pass when they are older. Neither view is acceptable.

Attendance is improving, including for groups, such as students known to be eligible for free school meals and those with special educational needs. Stronger sanctions are helping to bring down persistent absence, which has almost halved on the same time last year.

External support

The school continues to rely heavily on external support, both financially and for leadership capacity. It is currently carrying a deficit budget of approximately £900,000. Buckinghamshire County Council has granted additional funds to furnish the new building. The Buckinghamshire Learning Trust finances the work of the consultant headteacher, whose experience is proving critical in helping the new Principal establish priorities in the face of multiple challenges. The Trust's Director of Education monitors the school's position directly and has secured continuity of support while the school waits to become an academy. The Trust has also brokered links with an outstanding school locally, to support the development of better teaching through training and leadership exchanges, but this is at its early stages.