

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 01173115246
Direct F 01173150430
Direct email: Sara.Whalley@Tribalgroup.com

30 April 2015

Mrs N Henderson
River Mead School
Lowbourne
Melksham
SN12 7ED

Dear Mrs Henderson

Serious weaknesses first monitoring inspection of River Mead School

Following my visit to your school on 29 April 2015, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the outcome and 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 most recent section 5 inspection.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to have serious weaknesses in January 2015. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Evidence

During this inspection, meetings were held with the Head of School, the Executive Headteacher (and representative of the Mead Academy Trust), the Chair of the Governing Body, a representative of the local authority, the lead teacher for vulnerable pupils and the Head of Inclusion. The sponsor's statement of action and the school's action plans were evaluated.

Context

Since the section 5 inspection, there have been no changes of staff.

The quality of leadership and management at the school

In a short space of time since the inspection, the head of school and executive headteacher are responding very positively to the challenge of improving those areas identified as weaknesses. They are strengthening practices that were beginning to have a positive impact prior to the inspection. They are introducing a number of rigorous and robust initiatives to ensure that improvement plans are focused tightly on those aspects that require most rapid change. The plans helpfully link to challenging, but realistic, priorities for improving achievement. There is a detailed

record of actions to be taken, both to implement required changes and to assess how well they work. The staff are beginning to support the changes enthusiastically and well. In this process, extremely good support is provided by the sponsor Trust and local authority improvement advisers.

One consequence of these initiatives has been an improvement in the rate of progress made by pupils, especially in the early years and those who have better support for their learning difficulties and disabilities. The 'Reading Rockets' programme for pupils in Years 2 and 4 is helping to accelerate their reading skills, especially in Years 2 and 4. Pupils who have made slow progress in mathematics in the past are now developing their skills more quickly and with greater confidence.

Subject leaders are beginning to analyse information about pupils' progress more carefully so that teacher assessments are more accurate. In addition, teachers use their findings to plan lessons that match the learning needs of pupils more appropriately. There is good teaching in a number of year groups and this is beginning to be shared well across all groups. All teaching assistants are involved more effectively to support learning.

The governing body is very aware of the changes taking place and is now asking appropriately rigorous questions about the impact of new initiatives on pupils' achievement. It contributes well to action planning and makes regular visits to classrooms to survey progress in the quality of teaching and learning.

Understandably, much of the improvement work is in its infancy and there has not been sufficient time for leaders to demonstrate that the initiatives are bringing about the required improvements over time. However, there has been a very encouraging beginning in remedying the weaknesses identified in the last inspection.

Following the monitoring inspection the following judgements were made:

The school's action plans are fit for purpose.

The sponsor's statement of action is fit for purpose.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the local Governing Body, the Academies Advisers Unit at the Department for Education, the Chair of Directors of the Mead Academy Trust, and the Director of Children's Services for Wiltshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Peter Limm
Additional Inspector