

Tribal Group  
1-4 Portland Square  
Bristol  
BS2 8RR  
T 0845 123 6001  
F 0845 123 6002

Ofsted helpline  
08456 404045  
[edhelpline@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:edhelpline@ofsted.gov.uk)



6 December 2006

Mr D Derbyshire  
The Headteacher  
Wadham School  
Mount Pleasant  
Yeovil Road  
Crewkerne  
Somerset  
TA18 7NT

Dear Mr Derbyshire

## SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF WADHAM SCHOOL

### Introduction

Following my visit with Carol Worthington and Mary Vallis, Additional Inspectors, to your school on 23 and 24 November 2006, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the third monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures in October 2005.

This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website. Please inform the Regional Inspection Service Provider of any factual inaccuracies within 24 hours of the receipt of this letter.

### Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work including 19 parts of lessons, a form period and an assembly. A range of documentation was scrutinised and meetings were held with the headteacher, groups of students, the chair of governors and other key staff. A telephone conversation was held with a representative from the local authority (LA).

### Context

The permanent headteacher took up post in September 2006. Delegated powers have been restored to the governing body

## Achievement and standards

Despite improvements in national tests and examinations in 2006, standards remain below average and achievement is inadequate. The school failed to meet its statutory targets for higher GCSE grades and, whilst standards at Key Stage 3 improved, the achievement of boys, particularly in English, is a concern and well below that of girls.

The school is using data more efficiently to identify underachievement and check students' progress in subjects. This, together with a determined focus on monitoring and evaluating teaching and learning, is helping to raise achievement. Progress in 17 of the 19 lessons seen during this visit was judged satisfactory or better.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in October 2005:

- raise achievement at GCSE – satisfactory
- monitor students' progress more effectively – satisfactory.

## Personal development and well-being

Students' behaviour is satisfactory. Rigorous and consistently applied strategies to encourage good behaviour are proving effective. Students understand, and generally keep to, the behaviour policy and its clear system of rewards and sanctions. This is evident in the reduction of external and internal exclusions and detentions.

Good levels of supervision are appreciated by students and help them feel safe. They report that rare incidents of bullying are dealt with swiftly. Use of sixth form students to supplement adult mentors is rewarding and helpful in modifying the behaviour of those finding self control difficult. Some behaviour is immature and disruptive and is usually, but not always, apparent where teaching is weakest.

The appointment of an attendance officer has contributed positively to attendance targets being exceeded. The current attendance figure is 92% and rising. Attendance is checked daily and includes attendance at out of school activities. Parents are informed immediately of any unexplained absence and asked to provide a reason. Good attendance is rewarded and linked to successful learning.

Attitudes to learning are satisfactory overall. Although most students apply themselves to their work, they are not sufficiently involved in their learning or aware of how to improve. Students speak well of their school and appreciate that difficulties are being addressed. They feel listened to and respect the school council but could cite few instances where their views have resulted in action being taken.

Preparation for life beyond Wadham is good and helps to raise students' expectations and self-esteem. Students especially appreciate work experience and visits to colleges and universities.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in October 2005:

- improve behaviour and attendance in the main school – good.

### Quality of provision

The school's rigorous monitoring of teaching and learning and the ensuing training and support programme have resulted in improvement. The majority of lessons seen were satisfactory or better and the proportion of inadequate lessons has decreased.

In the most effective lessons, good progress is made because teachers use assessment information well to set appropriate learning objectives. They plan a range of activities that motivate and challenge students, including those with learning difficulties and the gifted and talented. In these lessons, students usually behave well and are more eager to learn.

Whilst, there have been good improvements in behaviour overall, students' attitudes to learning are 'stuck' at satisfactory because too many teachers are reluctant to try approaches that require them to take responsibility for their learning, participate, and think independently. Consequently, too many students expect to be coerced into working rather than involved in their learning.

Assessment is regularly carried out and the school collates extensive data to monitor progress. However, this is in the early stages of being used effectively to accelerate the progress of all groups of learners. The quality of support for students with learning difficulties is inconsistent because not all teachers have a precise understanding of their needs. Sometimes, the resulting poor behaviour becomes the issue rather than the barrier to learning that is at the root of the frustration.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in October 2005:

- improve attitudes to learning in lessons – satisfactory.

### Leadership and management

The headteacher's clear and perceptive leadership has been an important factor in establishing a shared vision of a successful future for the school and an understanding of what needs to be done to secure it. The new school improvement plan outlines a coherent and concerted approach to tackling the

existing challenges. It also includes plans to review the school's specialist status. Most staff and students have not yet developed strong ownership of the specifics of the plan but they do share a broad understanding of how they can bring about further improvement. Systems for monitoring and evaluating the work of the school are sharpening the accountability of staff in delivering improved outcomes for students. Evaluation is well founded and accurate. The monitoring of teaching and learning is rigorous in setting high expectations. It is increasingly focused on spreading and developing good practice. Procedures for checking students' progress identify underachievement and make teachers accountable but do not yet lead to the systematic identification of individualised, subject specific targets for students that will help to accelerate progress.

The continuous professional development of staff has been given a high priority. Particular emphasis has been given to strengthening teamwork and securing a collective understanding of what constitutes effective leadership. The restructured senior leadership team is now setting the strategic direction for the school. The determination to improve outcomes for students is generating a sense of belief and purpose throughout the school. The consequent improved leadership at all levels has contributed to raising students' achievement and increasing the capacity for further improvement. Subject and pastoral leaders are growing in confidence and are taking responsibility for the consistent implementation of whole-school policies. Clearer line management arrangements are supporting their endeavours.

Delegated powers have been restored to the governing body. Governors are involved in monitoring the work of the school and setting its strategic direction. They are well informed about development plans and increasingly effective in supporting and challenging those charged with responsibility for implementation.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in October 2005:

- improve the impact and consistency of management policies – good.

#### External support

Support from the local authority has been effective. There has been an appropriate focus on improving teaching and learning which has been instrumental in improving the overall quality of provision. Support and training for the governing body has contributed to their improving capacity to hold the school to account.

#### Main Judgements

Progress since being subject to special measures – satisfactory.

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – good.

Newly qualified teachers may be appointed.

Priorities for further improvement

Improve the quality of teaching and learning further by:

- ensuring teachers and teaching assistants develop their expertise in evaluating students' learning in lessons and intervening to accelerate progress
- setting students individualised, subject specific targets that clarify what they must do to improve
- establishing a shared, precise understanding of the needs of students with learning difficulties so that they are more effectively met.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the chair of governors, the Director of Children and Young People for Somerset and the Diocesan Director of Education for Bath and Wells.

Yours sincerely

Jacqueline White  
Her Majesty's Inspector