

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

T 08456 40 40 40  
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk  
[www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)



2 July 2008

Mrs A Mills  
The Acting Headteacher  
Maidenhill School  
Kings Road  
Stonehouse  
Gloucestershire  
GL10 2HA

Dear Mrs Mills

#### SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF MAIDENHILL SCHOOL

Following my visit with Anthony Shield and Timothy Gilson, Additional Inspectors, to your school on 24 June 2008, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the fourth monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures in November 2006. The monitoring inspection report is attached and the main judgements are set out below.

Progress since being subject to special measures – satisfactory.

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – satisfactory.

Newly qualified teachers may be appointed subject to approval by Ofsted.

This letter and monitoring inspection report 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.

I am copying this letter and the monitoring inspection report to the Secretary of State, the chair of governors and the Group Director of Children's and Young People's Services for Gloucestershire.

Yours sincerely

Mary Harlow  
H M Inspector

## SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING OF MAIDENHILL SCHOOL

Report from the fourth monitoring inspection: 24 June 2008

### Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents, and met with the acting headteacher, the executive headteacher, senior leaders, middle managers, a group of students, three governors and a representative from the local authority (LA).

### Context

Following the third monitoring visit in February 2008 the substantive headteacher resigned and has been absent from school. The seconded deputy headteacher was appointed acting headteacher in his absence; she will remain in this post until August 2008. An associate headteacher has been supporting the school for a morning a week and, from the start of term 5, an executive headteacher has been providing additional support for, on average, three days a week. The school has been successful in recruiting a permanent headteacher who will be in post from September 2008.

The English and science departments will be fully staffed with specialist teachers at the start of the next academic year. However, the school continues to have difficulties recruiting permanent specialist teachers in mathematics and information and communication technology (ICT). The significant number of temporary supply teachers to cover staff absences, particularly in mathematics, science and ICT, has continued since the previous monitoring visit. Several members of staff, some who hold key management leadership positions, have been or still are, on long term absence due to ill health.

The chair of governors resigned recently; the vice chair is now acting chair in her place until the permanent position can be filled. Following the previous monitoring visit the school discovered serious budgetary concerns and notified the LA. These have, in part, been due to exceptionally high costs to cover the significant staff absence coupled with increased falling rolls in student numbers.

### Achievement and standards

During the inspection, students were observed making broadly satisfactory progress. A scrutiny of students' books confirms that most are making satisfactory progress, although basic literacy and numeracy skills remain weak for many students. While current progress is satisfactory, a legacy of underachievement remains, and overall achievement remains inadequate.

The school's tracking of students' progress indicates that performance in GCSE examinations this summer is likely to exceed the results achieved in 2007, although it will still be below the ambitious targets set. The school has worked hard to tackle underachievement. Strategies, including holiday revision programmes to provide

additional support for students at risk of not fulfilling their potential, have largely been successful in raising expectations and in boosting achievement. However, the percentage of students on track to achieve five or more A\* to C grades including English and mathematics remains too low. At Key Stage 3, mock test results and teacher assessments suggest some improvement on 2007 results although students will not meet the targets the school set for English, mathematics and science.

Despite the senior leaders' sterling efforts to recruit good temporary support from the consultants and other schools, students' progress in mathematics has been adversely affected by staff absence.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in November 2006:

- improve standards and pupils' achievement, especially for the average attaining pupils in English, mathematics and science – satisfactory

### Personal development and well-being

Although this aspect was not a particular focus for this visit, the strengths noted at the last monitoring visit have been maintained. However, stubborn pockets of low level disruptive behaviour still exist in some lessons, particularly when teaching is uninspiring. The students report that recent plans to develop the work of the school council to ensure that their voice matters, and is heard, are good.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in November 2006:

- significantly reduce the poor behaviour of the minority of pupils – satisfactory.

### Quality of provision

The school's extensive programme of lesson observations and those observed during the inspection show that teaching remains satisfactory overall. The considerable difficulties that the school experiences in recruiting suitably qualified permanent staff means that there is considerable variation in the quality of teaching; some aspects of teaching observed on this visit were inadequate. In the least effective lessons students continue to remain passive because lessons are overly dominated by teacher talk. When students are not actively engaged in their learning their concentration wanders; they drift off task and chat. In the better lessons students are involved; there are opportunities for group and paired work and students are suitably challenged. The school has worked tirelessly to develop a system for tracking pupil progress. However, too many teachers are not yet using assessment information accurately to plan lessons that are suitably matched to the students' needs and abilities. Staff give generously of their time in offering revision classes after school and in holiday periods. Students have responded well by attending regularly and working hard.

The school continues to expand the curriculum, particularly at Key Stage 4, with an appropriate and imaginative range of vocational courses, such as the 'Young People Arts Award' and the 'imedia' course. The school's specialist area of performing arts is taking a clear lead in providing a broader and more stimulating range of options for

students. Uptake of courses in the performing arts is increasing as students take advantage of the new curriculum on offer. The introduction of the Adult Literacy and Adult Numeracy (ALAN) qualifications is a positive development that the students value. In Year 7, the performing arts department will be taking a lead in the introduction of the new social and emotional aspects of learning curriculum (SEAL).

The school has extensive performance data which it uses to track students' performance and set targets. Most students are aware of their targets, but the complexity of the data system means these are not always securely based on the most appropriate data and, for some students, they are unrealistic. Whilst much training has taken place since the previous monitoring visit, teachers' confidence in their ability to analyse and use data effectively is patchy. As a result, the quality of academic guidance, including marking, remains inconsistent.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in November 2006:

- improve the quality of teaching and learning so that variations in standards in different subjects are markedly reduced – satisfactory.

### Leadership and management

Following a brief period of turbulence, the acting headteacher, with the support of other senior leaders and seconded members of staff, has brought a renewed sense of direction and stability to the school. She is confronting challenging staffing and financial issues assiduously and seeking appropriate advice from the seconded senior leaders and the LA. In response to budgetary constraints and falling rolls, the current staffing structure is under review.

An improvement team has been established to increase the involvement of the staff in bringing about the urgent changes required to raise standards and achievement. The group are working tirelessly to reinforce the school's values and ethos in order to achieve greater consistency in the quality of teaching and learning on offer. Meetings are used sensibly to elicit the views of staff and to respond to them. Several staff reported that morale has risen and they welcome the recent initiatives to improve consultation. Communication with the students and their parents and carers has increased through the regular Maidenhill Updates and the use of text messaging to inform and remind them of deadline dates and vital events.

The school continues to invest in a regular effective programme of professional development which seeks to encourage staff to share their skills and expertise. Staff report that the weekly 'learning focus time' is helping departments and teams to improve consistency of practice across the school. The time is now ripe for staff to observe good and better practice in other schools to help them raise their expectations of what students are capable of achieving. The performing arts continue to have an increasing influence on the work of the school and extensive work has been planned to achieve redesignation as a specialist school.

Whilst there has been a concerted effort by the senior team to improve the use of assessment data at all levels within the school to track the students' progress, there is still some way to go to ensure these systems are easily accessible and understood,

particularly by all the middle managers. In some cases data procedures are over complicated. As a result, it is difficult to monitor the ongoing progress of students easily and ensure that assessment informs planning and teaching on a regular basis. Most subject leaders are developing greater confidence in monitoring the work of their departments through scrutiny of planning and the students' work, analysis of test and examination papers, and lesson observations. Difficulties in recruitment, coupled with staff absence, have adversely affected the leadership and management of several subjects, particularly mathematics. The governing body is not holding the school to account in a sufficiently challenging and robust manner, although there is a will to do so to improve its effectiveness.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in November 2006:

- make better use of assessment information and monitor the school's provision systematically and rigorously to improve performance and standards – satisfactory.

#### External support

The school values the support received from the seconded headteachers, the LA consultants, and the leader for intervention and challenge. That said, at this pivotal time for the school in its journey through special measures, continued support at all levels is vital if it is to achieve the urgent progress required for the fifth and final monitoring visit. Given the serious budgetary issues that have just come to a head, it is imperative that the school's financial management is monitored regularly and robustly.