

PROTECT - INSPECTION

Nord Anglia Inspections
Anglia House
Carrs Road
Cheadle
Stockport
SK8 2LA

T 08456 40 40 40
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk

Direct T 0161 491 4191
Direct F 0161 491 4409



17 November 2008

Mr Rob Arrowsmith
Acting Headteacher
Pathways Special School
Tennyson Avenue
Grangetown
Middlesbrough
TS6 7NP

Dear Mr Arrowsmith

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Pathways Special School

Following my visit with Dave Smith Additional Inspector, to your school on 12 and 13 November 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 March 2007. 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 the agreement of the monitoring HMI.

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 Director of Adult and Children's Services for Redcar and Cleveland LA.

Yours sincerely

Heather Richardson
H M Inspector

Special measures: monitoring of Pathways Special School

Report from the fourth monitoring inspection on 12 and 13 November 2008

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with executive headteacher and acting headteacher, members of the teaching and support staff, groups of pupils, the chair of governors and a representative from the local authority (LA).

Context

There have been significant changes to the school since the previous monitoring inspection. The headteacher, deputy headteacher and consultant are no longer at the school and the chair of governors resigned. The school has been federated with the LA's education other than at school service (EOTAS) and the alternative education centre, and EOTAS staff now fulfil the roles of executive headteacher, acting headteacher and acting deputy headteacher. The strengthened governing body has a new chair. The new leadership team has introduced several changes. These include a restructured school day and curriculum, the re-arrangement of both teaching groups and accommodation, and a different approach to behaviour management. The new subject leader for English has taken up her post and some courses are taught by staff from EOTAS through federation arrangements.

Achievement and standards

The provisional results of the 2008 external assessments show that, although a small number of pupils achieved at least one result in line with national expectations, there was much underachievement. The outcomes at Key Stage 2 were generally better than those at Key Stages 3 and 4. Underachievement at Key Stage 4 in particular was linked to the limited range of accredited courses available to these pupils as well as weaknesses in teaching and learning. The revisions made to the secondary curriculum since September have the potential to raise achievement. There is early evidence that standards in English are beginning to rise, as Key Stage 4 pupils have already completed course work of a markedly better quality than that produced by pupils at a similar stage in the past. Inspectors also saw work from individual pupils which represented better progress for them than that seen on previous monitoring inspections, for example in mathematics. The sample of pupils' work provided for inspectors also showed that pupils are presenting their work more carefully. A priority from the previous monitoring inspection was to improve literacy across the curriculum. There is evidence that this has been given a high profile in displays and in the focus on vocabulary in lessons. The school recognises that there is some way to go, but a training and development programme is in place.

Progress since the last visit on the area for improvement:

- Raise standards in English in Key Stages 3 and 4 – satisfactory

Personal development and well-being

The school's philosophy and practice in relation to behaviour has undergone a major transformation. It now includes an emphasis on pupils taking responsibility for their behaviour and recognising the consequences of their actions. Pupils are enthusiastic about the incentives to promote good behaviour and the opportunities to socialise with staff in the common room. The behaviour of some pupils has improved in lessons because of higher expectations and a curriculum which is better matched to their needs. There has been a significant reduction in the number of fixed-term exclusions and the school reports that there have been no occasions when physical intervention has been necessary. However, at the time of the inspection, there was too much volatile behaviour which disrupted learning. This was most notable among Key Stage 3 pupils who are not yet coping well enough with opportunities to manage their own behaviour. Pupils are still adjusting to the changes and staff are not yet operating the new systems consistently, but most staff and pupils recognise the benefits of the improved ways of managing behaviour. There is clear evidence that pupils appreciate and are benefiting from the personal mentor system which has been introduced this term, both in managing their behaviour and promoting attendance. The school's attendance figures, including timely registration, are now more robust and the systems for tackling poor attendance are more rigorous. However, they show levels of authorised absence and internal absence from lessons which remain too high. Although the school's systems for both behaviour management and attendance are better, the improved outcomes the school expects have not yet been secured. Behaviour and attendance continue to limit pupils' achievement.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- Improve pupils' attitudes and behaviour – inadequate
- Improve attendance – inadequate

Quality of provision

As on previous monitoring inspections, there is some strong teaching to which pupils generally respond well; the teaching of English now benefits from specialist expertise. Teachers' plans increasingly identify the support for individual pupils and targets are set and used for both learning and behaviour. Lessons are planned to a common format which sets the lesson in the wider context of the topic being studied as well as setting learning objectives for that lesson. This is helping to promote consistency, but some inconsistencies remain in practice, particularly in behaviour management. Marking is improving, with the strengths and next steps identified for pupils. Pupils' progress is being tracked more accurately, although the revised system is at an early stage. However, the school has not yet reached the proportion of good teaching required to enable pupils to compensate for previous underachievement. Some teaching remains too dull and in some lessons, teachers are too ready to help pupils to complete the work, mainly by acting as scribes.

There has been a major restructuring of the curriculum since the start of this term, to promote pupils' entitlement to all the subjects of the National Curriculum and religious education (RE). There is a clear rationale for the curriculum and almost all courses are now in place; this represents an important step forward. In addition, there has been a clear focus on providing a range of curriculum pathways for pupils in Key Stage 4 in particular. This reflects the school's emphasis on higher expectations for pupils. Federation with EOTAS and work with other partners has contributed to this enrichment and to improved opportunities for pupils to gain qualifications. Pupils are also benefiting from extra-curricular provision, such as the football club, which is attracting good numbers, as well as opportunities to take responsibility in school. The timing of the school day has been rescheduled, in consultation with parents. This allows for a more appropriate length of lessons as well as improved curriculum opportunities because the timetable is aligned with those of the other providers in the federation.

As noted above, the introduction of personal mentors is making an effective contribution to the care provided by the school. Early evidence suggests that the revised arrangements for breaks and lunchtimes, with opportunities for pupils and staff to socialise, are also proving beneficial in developing the quality of care and support for pupils.

- Create more and better opportunities for Key Stage 4 pupils to achieve success – satisfactory
- Increase the time given to pupils' education and ensure that the statutory requirements for the curriculum are met – satisfactory

Leadership and management

The school's new senior leadership team has, within a short space of time, made significant strides in giving the school a clear sense of purpose and direction. As senior leaders are aware, much remains to be done to embed new systems and ensure that pupils achieve the outcomes of which they are capable, both in their behaviour and their learning. Nevertheless, the evidence from this monitoring inspection indicates that the corner has been turned in taking the school forward. Senior leaders have a very clear and accurate understanding of what the school needs to do to improve, as is seen in the school's first self-evaluation document. They have made sensible use of external evaluation to provide a baseline for improvement. Staff, pupils and visitors commented favourably on the positive atmosphere now present in the school, while recognising that not everything goes smoothly all of the time. The effort made by staff to prepare the school for its reopening in September, following a major reorganisation of classrooms, is to their credit. Most staff have responded positively to the increased opportunities to take responsibility and the increased accountability for performance; this includes the wider senior management team. More constructive relationships have been developed with parents; these are leading to increased participation by parents in the life of the school, including membership of the governing body. The governing

body has a stronger membership and is undertaking its role to support and challenge the school more effectively.

Progress since the last visit on the area for improvement:

- Monitor performance thoroughly to provide information for more accurate self-evaluation – good

External support

The LA has provided good support for the school in a difficult and challenging transitional period, at both strategic and operational levels. Very good relationships now exist between the LA and school; school leaders value the advice, support and challenge which the LA has provided, and the work of consultants in supporting classroom practice is appreciated by teachers. A constructive relationship is also developing with the SIP who is now in post for the school.

Priorities for further improvement

- Ensure the behaviour management system is applied consistently.
- Improve the rate of pupils' progress.
- Develop the capacity and expertise of the extended senior management team.