

Tribal Education  
1-4 Portland Square  
BRISTOL  
BS2 8RR

T 0300 123 1231  
Text Phone: 0161 6188524  
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk  
[www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)



22 March 2010

Mr Glyn Whiteford  
Headteacher  
Denefield School  
Long Lane  
Tilehurst  
Reading  
RG31 6XY

Dear Mr Whiteford

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Denefield School

Following my visit with Mary Massey HMI and Peter Callow, Additional Inspector, to your school on 9 and 10 March 2010, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the third monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures in December 2008. 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

This letter and monitoring inspection report will be posted on the Ofsted website.

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

Yours sincerely

Cathie Munt  
Her Majesty's Inspector



Special measures: monitoring of Denefield School

Report from the third monitoring inspection on 9 and 10 March 2010

## Evidence

Inspectors observed parts of 37 lessons, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, senior leaders, a group of pupils, the chair and vice-chair of governors, the School Improvement Partner and a representative from the local authority.

## Context

Since the last monitoring visit, a premises manager has been appointed to a permanent post and a canopy has been erected, adjacent to the canteen, improving lunchtime facilities for students.

## Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning

The range of intervention strategies put in place over the last year to improve standards continues to have a positive impact on the development of the students' basic skills and knowledge on the increasing rate of progress made by many students and on their enjoyment of school. Progress in two lessons in Key Stage 3 was limited. This was partly because the work was either too demanding or too simple, partly because the students were inattentive and lacked self-discipline and partly because of inconsistencies in the deployment of teaching assistants. In some higher ability groups, for example Year 9 English, standards were above average and well-motivated students were making very good progress in their learning. A Year 11 group who had taken GCSE French a year early were thoroughly enjoying making rapid progress in their acquisition of a second foreign language. In the majority of lessons, standards were close to, or in line with, expectations, although weaknesses in punctuation and spelling still mar the presentation of much of the students' work. English department staff are working systematically with colleagues to improve this situation. In the humanities department, where training has taken place, these weaknesses were less evident in Year 8 geography work.

Staff are working successfully to overcome the legacy of underachievement in the main school and predictions indicate an improvement in examination results in 2011. Although the proportion of students achieving five A\* to C grades and five A\* to G grades at GCSE in 2009 was higher than in 2008, girls' attainment was lower than that of girls nationally and the overall points score was lower. Consequently, attainment for last year's GCSE students was on the borderline of satisfactory and inadequate. Students' progress between Years 7 to 11 was not consistent across all groups. While students with special educational needs and/or disabilities made good progress from a low starting point, girls in the average range did not make as much progress as they might have done. The school's data show that satisfactory progress

is being made by students in Years 10 and 11 and in the sixth form. There is a need to secure the quality of teacher assessment in Years 7 to 9 in order to measure progress accurately in Key Stage 3. Students in the sixth form are making satisfactory progress in their studies. Those on applied courses are doing particularly well as a result of good quality teaching in small groups.

Children in the Nursery play happily alongside each other. They appear to enjoy being with and talking to other children and to adults, who help them to feel safe and secure. Individual plans for the children's development and portfolios of their achievement have been established. However, these do not identify clearly the children's next steps in learning based on sufficiently detailed assessment, making it difficult to gauge how much progress each child is making.

Homework (extended learning) was not reviewed on this monitoring visit as the school has introduced changes to the way that this is provided for. The impact of tutors' work with students during half-hour sessions in the middle of the day will be considered during the next monitoring visit.

Progress since the last inspection on the areas for improvement

- Improve the rate of students' progress by ensuring that teachers' expectations are high, and that work set in lessons and for homework is interesting, challenging, and done with good pace – satisfactory.

Other relevant pupil outcomes

Attendance, at 92.3%, is close to the target of 92.5%. The school has continued to work supportively with persistent absentees and their families. This resulted in a drop in persistent absenteeism from just over 11% to 7.4% last year. This year's figure so far is 7%. There have been impressive improvements in attendance for individual students with a consequent improvement in their attainment and progress. The work of the student managers, in conjunction with the guidance managers, is helping the school to identify and work more effectively with sub-groups whose attendance is causing concern. Current work with groups of low attending girls has identified the lack of additional vocational courses, such as beauty and hair. The school is looking to expand provision in conjunction with other schools. Effective practice has evolved within the school and with partner schools to support the re-integration of students who are excluded.

Behaviour around the school is well supported by senior staff patrolling during lessons and at break times. The 16 newly appointed prefects ably assist in maintaining orderly behaviour at changeover times and in the canteen. The majority of students act responsibly whether or not they are being observed. However, there are a few younger students whose self-control is less well developed and who occasionally behave inconsiderately in corridors and in lessons. A few staff did not apply the behaviour policy effectively in lessons. They allowed students to talk over



them and did not maintain the good behaviour seen in many classes. The role of some teaching assistants was inconsistent in supporting staff in this matter.

Progress since the last inspection on the areas for improvement

- Improve students' attendance – satisfactory

The effectiveness of provision

A group of Year 10 students spoke most positively about the improvements evident in much of the teaching and learning this year. They are enjoying the more structured tutor periods and welcome more frequent opportunities to discuss their targets and other aspects of their performance on an individual basis. They feel that staff know them more as individuals and that, consequently, they are able to tailor the guidance and support more effectively. The procedures for choosing options in Year 9 have been improved greatly to take better account of individuals' strengths and talents and to try to minimise failure due to poor choices. Interviews have just been held for admission to the sixth form and here, also, processes and procedures have been designed to maximise success for those students who are accepted. Students feel happy with the quality of care, guidance and support. This has improved, particularly in the guidance for future courses. The school is aware that, although there is good practice, the quality of the feedback students receive through marking is still inconsistent across the school. Middle managers are in the process of undertaking a review.

Inspectors' observations support the school's view that there is now a much higher proportion of good teaching with some that is outstanding and only a very few inadequate lessons. This is a clear indication that the programme of continuing professional development is having a positive impact. Lesson planning is good. Plans indicate the different student groups, the learning objectives, success criteria and the time given to each section of the lesson. Higher expectations of pace and challenge were evident in the better lessons and students enjoyed working at a range of related tasks. However, there were still a few lessons where everyone was working at the same task with insufficient support for those who were struggling and too little challenge for those who found it too easy. Intervention programmes for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, particularly those who have a statement, are good. There is a wide range of support available and the student's progress is monitored carefully to maximise their learning.

Progress since the last inspection on the areas for improvement

- Improve academic guidance in the written and oral feedback on students' work, in the setting and reviewing of targets, and in the advice about what courses to study – good.

## The effectiveness of leadership and management

The drive for improving standards and ensuring that students receive a high quality education is securely embedded throughout all levels of management. Curriculum leaders are well aware of their roles and responsibilities for driving up standards and they are working on several projects with their departments to improve their students' performance. For example, under the auspices of the Gaining Ground initiative, the mathematics department is trialling new ways of working and of engaging students more effectively in assessing their own level of attainment. The school regularly evaluates its performance against appropriate criteria. Continued improvements in the quality of teaching attest to the success of coaching and mentoring by senior leaders as well as to the appropriateness of the training programmes provided for staff. It is an important step in the right direction that two members of staff are working with other schools helping them to improve different aspects of their provision. There have been changes in the management structure of the Nursery. A senior leader was appointed as the line manager for the Nursery staff and a well qualified governor is overseeing developments. Additional resources have been provided but there has been limited progress in the development of assessment processes.

Governors play a proactive part in the school and hold senior staff to account suitably through the work of their committees. They have undertaken a skills audit and have formalised procedures for visiting the school.

Progress since the last inspection on the areas for

- Improving leaders' and managers' skills in reviewing, judging and lifting the quality of educational provision, both in the main school and in the Nursery: this includes governors as well as staff – good

## External support

The work of the School Improvement Partner continues to provide very good support and guidance. His training sessions for governors have been well received and have provided high quality, tailored input. Local authority staff have played an important role in ensuring consistency in teachers' moderation of students' work in English and mathematics. They have also supported the implementation of Assessing Pupil Progress effectively.

Priorities for further improvement

- Ensure that arrangements for planning and assessing the progress of children in the Nursery are robust and that children make demonstrably good progress in their learning.

