

Tribal Group
1-4 Portland
Square
Bristol
BS2 8RR

T 0300 1234 234
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk

3 February 2010

Mrs Rachel Smith
Head of Centre
Nyland Special School
Nyland Road
Nythe
Swindon
SN3 3RD

Dear Mrs Smith

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Nyland Special School

Following my visit to your school on 2 February 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 first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures in September 2009. The monitoring inspection report is attached and the main judgements are set out below.

Progress since being subject to special measures – satisfactory.

Newly Qualified Teachers may be appointed only after discussion with HMI.

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 the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Swindon.

Yours sincerely

Steffi Penny

Her Majesty's Inspector

Special measures: monitoring of Nyland Special School

Report from the first monitoring inspection on 2 February 2010

Evidence

The inspector observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with staff, the executive headteacher, the head of centre, the chair of the interim executive board and representatives from the local authority.

Context

Since the last inspection disruption to staffing has continued. All teaching staff are either on supply, secondment or contracted until the end of the academic year. An interim executive board was appointed in January and is due to have its first meeting in the next fortnight. One of the four classes has been divided into two.

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

Since the last inspection pupils' progress has been monitored and school records show small but steady improvements for most pupils who attend school regularly. Tracking is conducted every two weeks and this is used to inform pupils' individual education plans. Therefore systems are now in place that breakdown the small steps of progress that pupils have made and this is helping to identify gaps in learning and understanding. The school now needs to build on these records but needs closer references to attendance, time out of class, and rewards. All class teachers need to use these records to ensure that the evaluation of teaching is consistent, including teachers' own evaluations of how well their individual lessons have had an impact on pupils' learning and behaviour. Assessment in one class is not as advanced as in the others due to the frequency of staff changes. The school is aware of this and is working with current staff to ensure the accuracy of judgements about pupils' achievement and attainment.

Progress since the last inspection:

- Introduce assessment systems as a matter of urgency so that:
 - pupils' progress can be tracked and increased over time to ensure it is at least satisfactory and information is available to teachers to guide their lesson planning – satisfactory progress
 - teaching meets pupils' individual learning needs – inadequate progress.



Other relevant pupil outcomes

The school has worked closely with other agencies to monitor and improve attendance. A good example of this is the fortnightly multi-agency meetings where professionals work together to devise interventions and support for pupils.

During the monitoring visit the staff observed were consistently using the school 'apple' reward system for good behaviour. Data generated from the results of these rewards in conjunction with behaviour profile records and senior leaders' records of lesson observations demonstrate that in the round pupils' behaviour is improving.

Safeguarding and risk assessments have been appropriately carried out. As a result of this the school increased the ratio of staff to pupils to ensure that two staff trained in positive handling techniques are in each class to keep everyone safe. Major physical interventions have decreased but exclusions remain too high.

Progress since the last inspection:

- Improve behaviour as a matter of urgency, so that pupils are clear about the standards expected and learning is not disrupted, by:
 - developing consistency among staff in the awarding of merits for positive behaviour – satisfactory progress
 - carrying out and acting upon risk assessments to ensure the health and safety of pupils and adults – satisfactory progress.

The effectiveness of provision

The curriculum does not meet the needs of the pupils. This is because staff do not know the pupils well enough, for example by appreciating where important gaps are in the pupils' understanding and learning. Assessment records are helping to improve teachers' knowledge about these gaps but all staff need to be more aware of what these are and how they are to be resolved. There are significant missed opportunities to provide and support pupils' emotional and social needs, for example through integrated 'therapy' and planned opportunities to increase pupils' independence. Because of the high number of adults in classrooms, often one to one, staff are too visible and sometimes hamper independence as well as peer learning and play.

Not enough classrooms are providing good learning environments for pupils. For example, role play and quiet reflection areas, wall displays, and the use of computers to support learning in the classrooms need to be reconsidered.

Progress since the last inspection:

- Improve the curriculum to ensure that it engages pupils and meets their emotional and academic needs – inadequate progress.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The seconded leadership team has established a safer learning environment for pupils and staff. Due to a variety of reasons, including long-term staff illness, the school has needed to use a considerable number of different supply staff since the last inspection. The constant changing of staff hinders improvements in pupils' learning and behaviour. The lack of permanent appointments creates uncertainty and anxiety for staff and pupils. Where possible the school has kept the changes of staff to a minimum and provided specialist training in positive handling techniques for those that have stayed on a longer contract. This training was rightly provided to ensure the safety of staff and pupils. However, it has meant that other staff training, for example on what a good curriculum looks like in a primary special school for children who have emotional, behaviour and social difficulties, has not taken place. Only one member of staff has a combined background in this phase and area. As an urgent priority the school needs to increase the capacity of all staff to be able to teach and support a more appropriate curriculum to meet the pupils' needs.

In contrast to other pupils, one has behaviour patterns that have continued to deteriorate significantly since the last inspection. Also, currently three pupils are not attending school full time due to their extreme behaviour, and two more children are not receiving full-time education as they are on a waiting list to join the school. Not enough is being done collectively with other agencies to support these children and their families to ensure that they either attend school or receive an appropriate education elsewhere.

Following the inspection, support from the local authority and the seconded leadership team ensured that safeguarding and statutory requirements are being met. The interim executive board has only been in place for a few weeks and it is too early to determine its effectiveness.

Progress since the last inspection:

- Increase the governing body's skill in checking and challenging the school's performance and in ensuring that statutory requirements are met – not monitored on this visit.

External support

External support provided by the local authority through secondments has made the school safer for staff and pupils. The local authority is considering several options for the school's future and is aware that this should be resolved as soon as possible so that longer-term, sustainable plans and actions can be undertaken.

The action plan provided by the local authority meets requirements and is being followed through effectively. A relative weakness in the plan is the lack of identified hands-on support from specialist high quality practitioners with expertise in teaching in a primary special school designated for children who have emotional, behavioural and social difficulties.



Priorities for further improvement

- Continue to work with the local authority to ensure that all pupils are placed appropriately and that all pupils on the school roll, or who are waiting to join it, receive the education to which they are entitled.