

Tribal
1-4 Portland Square
BRISTOL
BS2 8RR

T 0300 123 1231
Text Phone: 0161 6188524
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk

Direct T 0845 123 6001
Direct F 0117 315 0430
Email: Fiona.allan1@tribalgroup.com

28 June 2010

Mrs G Gillett
Headteacher
Southmead School
Wrafton Road
Braunton
Devon
EX33 2BU

Dear Mrs Gillett

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Southmead School

Following my visit to your school on 16 and 17 June 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 June 2009. 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 – good.

Newly Qualified Teachers may be appointed.

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's Services for Devon.

Yours sincerely

David Edwards
Her Majesty's Inspector

Special measures: monitoring of Southmead School

Report from the third monitoring inspection on 16 and 17 June 2010

Evidence

The inspector observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, the chair of the governors' action plan monitoring committee, senior leaders, teaching assistants, pupils and parent representatives.

Context

Since the previous monitoring visit, the headteacher has implemented further significant changes to the responsibilities held by senior and middle leaders. The deputy headteacher remains absent due to ill health.

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

All teachers now take responsibility for entering their assessment data into the school system which helps them to better understand the progress their pupils are making and to adjust their teaching accordingly. This process has also improved teachers' confidence in their work as they begin to see more children making better progress in their learning. The most recent school assessments indicate that, despite better progress being made in lessons by pupils', their attainments by the end of Key Stage 2 in English and mathematics remain below the national average. This is because of the extended period of previous underachievement experienced by these pupils. The consistently good teaching now seen in Key Stage 1 is resulting in more pupils making good progress in their learning and achieving more in line with national expectations.

The recent external moderation of children's achievements in the Early Years Foundation Stage confirms that children are settling quickly to their learning and making accelerated progress. As a result, all children who began school with skills and abilities that were below national expectations have made outstanding progress.

Progress since the last inspection:

- Improve pupils' achievement and raise standards in English, mathematics and science by:
 - establishing robust processes to check the ongoing progress of individuals and groups of pupils and use information gathered to set challenging performance targets – satisfactory.

Other relevant pupil outcomes

Pupils continue to demonstrate positive attitudes to their learning. They are becoming increasingly involved in self-assessing their work which is allowing them to take greater responsibility for their learning. Pupils are polite to each other, staff and visitors. They are proud of their school and the changes teachers have made to the curriculum to make it more interesting to learn. Behaviour is routinely good in and around the school.

The school adopts recommended good practice across all areas of its work regarding the safeguarding of pupils. Overall attendance for all groups of pupils has improved in the past year and is now broadly in line with the national average. This is a result of the rigorous yet supportive monitoring of pupils' attendance carried out by the school, working closely with support agencies.

The effectiveness of provision

The majority of teaching seen was good and this is an improvement to the previous visit. This is because more teachers are becoming confident in adjusting their teaching to provide more effectively for the differing learning needs of pupils. For example, in a mathematics lesson the teacher demonstrated how her improved knowledge of her pupils' learning needs, along with a greater confidence in subject knowledge, allowed her to adapt her questioning more appropriately to secure pupils' better understanding and move them on in their learning.

In a few lessons opportunities are still missed that would allow more pupils to make accelerated progress. This is because teachers do not always set high enough expectations or allow pupils to have a go at more challenging work.

Curriculum provision continues to provide a breadth of exciting learning opportunities for pupils, including regular opportunities to learn from visits out into the local environment. Further changes have been made within the curriculum to ensure pupils have plenty of opportunities to develop their writing skills.

The school's system for tracking the progress and development of pupils is now effectively embedded throughout the school. Leaders are able to use the outcomes of regular assessment data accurately to set challenging targets for raising pupils' achievements and to guide teachers in planning lessons that will more effectively meet the learning needs of all pupils.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- Ensure that targets and the assessment of pupils' progress are used to inform teaching so that it is well matched to the needs of all pupils

- Improve the quality of lessons to provide stimulating activities that engage and challenge all pupils and ensure that time is used effectively both in whole-class and small group sessions – satisfactory.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Outcomes of self-evaluation are being used to inform the strategic direction of the school which means governors are now better informed about the school's progress and development. As a result, governors are able to ask more challenging questions and provide a more secure and strategic guide to the headteacher.

The large number of teaching assistants within the school are effectively led and managed. They work closely as a team with teachers to ensure teaching provision supports pupils' learning. Training has been appropriately focused on developing teaching assistants' subject knowledge and skills to support pupils more effectively in lessons. As a result, teaching assistants are becoming more confident in their role of supporting teaching and learning.

The improved leadership and management of the school are allowing the headteacher to exercise a more strategic role in directing school improvement. She has met the challenges of recent months with professionalism and resilience and has successfully managed to sustain school improvement through galvanising the enthusiasm and commitment of her staff to good effect. As a result of this confidence and determination to succeed she has taken effective steps to empower middle leaders to take on more responsibility. In particular, the leaders involved in the assessment and monitoring of pupils' progress are providing the school with accurate information about pupils' achievements.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- Improve the effectiveness of leaders at all levels by:
 - developing more rigorous procedures and processes for self-evaluation, particularly focusing on pupils' performance
 - ensuring that all subject leaders, especially for English and mathematics, have the support, skills and opportunities to monitor and improve the quality of learning
 - ensuring that governors are kept well informed, enabling them to provide effective support and challenge to the school and fulfil their statutory duties – good.

External support

The external support offered to the school by the local authority and School Improvement Partner continues to be of real benefit. Good communications and a genuine sense of partnership are ensuring that improvement strategies are well

placed and that their implementation is monitored closely to secure maximum progress and improvement for pupil outcomes.

Priorities for further improvement

- To consider ways the local authority can reduce the level of support to the school without jeopardising pupils' entitlement to high-quality learning experiences.