

Tribal
1-4 Portland Square
BRISTOL
BS2 8RR

T 0300 123 1231
Text Phone: 0161 6188524 **Direct T** 0845 123 6001
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk **Direct F** 0117 315 0430
www.ofsted.gov.uk **Direct email:** rebecca.jackson@tribalgroup.com

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Mrs Christine Woodward
Executive Headteacher
Middle Barton School
27 Church Lane
Middle Barton
Chipping Norton
Oxfordshire
OX7 7BX

Dear Mrs Woodward

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Middle Barton School

Following my visit to your school on 1 and 2 May 2012, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in November 2011. The full list of the areas for improvement which were identified during that inspection is set out in the annex to this letter. 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 if they are mentored by teachers from the partner school.

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 Oxfordshire.

Yours sincerely

Lorna Brackstone
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in November 2011

- Strengthen leadership and management at all levels by:
 - implementing rigorous systems for checking all aspects of the school's performance, especially the progress pupils are making and the effectiveness of teaching
 - setting appropriately challenging targets for pupils' learning and progress and ensuring that teachers, subject leaders and the leader of provision for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are held accountable for pupils' progress towards them
 - ensuring that self-evaluation is accurate and based firmly on evidence
 - ensuring that the governing body plays a strong part in checking progress and evaluating the impact of action plans, and contributes systematically to planning for the future.

- Improve the quality of teaching so that all pupils make at least satisfactory progress, and particularly in mathematics, by:
 - ensuring that agreed whole-school approaches are consistently followed
 - ensuring that teachers have the highest expectations of how work will be presented
 - strengthening teachers' skills in asking questions in order to probe pupils' understanding, challenge them to think and develop their reasoning
 - making greater use of technology to enhance teaching and learning
 - further developing teachers' skills in using assessment information to plan tasks and activities that are suitably challenging for all pupils
 - ensuring that teaching assistants are deployed to best effect throughout.

- Strengthen the provision and leadership for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, so that these pupils make at least satisfactory progress by:
 - ensuring that pupils who may be having difficulty learning are identified as early as possible
 - assessing pupils' needs accurately so that interventions precisely match these needs
 - involving teaching assistants more fully in decision-making and checking the progress made by the pupils they support.

Special measures: monitoring of Middle Barton Primary School

Report from the first monitoring inspection on 1 and 2 May 2012

Evidence

The inspector observed all pupils at work in their lessons. She looked at the work in their books and scrutinised school documents. The inspector met with the executive headteacher and the associate headteacher. She also met with groups of pupils, parents and carers, five members of the governing body and a representative from the local authority.

Context

Following the absence of the substantive headteacher and the assistant headteacher, the headteacher and deputy headteacher from Bishop Loveday Primary School took up temporary posts as executive headteacher and associate headteacher at the beginning of January 2012. Four out of six permanent members of the teaching staff were absent at this time and two temporary teachers were appointed at the start of January to provide consistency. At the time of the monitoring visit one teacher recently returned to her full-time post and one had returned part time. Five new pupils have joined the school since the start of Term 3 in January. There are a number of new governors, including a new Chair and Vice-chair of the Governing Body.

Achievement of pupils at the school

Although pupil tracking records indicate that pupils' progress is improving, the legacy of past underachievement remains clearly evident in pupils' books. Nevertheless, this is being steadily rectified through the carefully targeted intervention teaching sessions and individual support programmes. For example, Year 6 pupils are receiving well-focused lessons in English and mathematics which provide effective preparation for the forthcoming national tests. Pupils report that these sessions are not only helping them to improve their knowledge and understanding but also enabling them to practise test techniques. Older pupils know that the literacy and numeracy activities set by their teachers are designed to help them understand what they need to do to improve their work and increase their rate of progress. Parents and carers of pupils in Year 1 and 2 enthusiastically report that, since January, the progress made by their children has been 'extraordinary' and they are delighted to report that they are just 'flying'. Children in the Reception and Year 1 class continue to progress well and attain above age-related expectations, as was observed when they organised their own resources to create their own 'flap-up' books. Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs are making better progress because their needs have been carefully assessed. Their individual targets are well focused and relevant, and appropriate tasks are planned for them. Special support, for example speech therapy and occupational health, is used well to support individual needs. Activities in class are appropriately planned to facilitate learning and regular meetings have been set up to monitor individual pupils' progress.

Progress since the last section 5 on the area for improvement.

- Strengthen the provision and leadership for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, so that these pupils make at least satisfactory progress – satisfactory.

The quality of teaching

By developing an understanding of how to use data to track pupils' progress and adopting a consistent approach to the moderation of pupils' work, teachers' expectations are improving and lessons provide greater challenge. Following visits to other schools and participation in staff training events, teachers have eagerly adopted interesting teaching approaches. These have improved the quality of their lessons and successfully engaged the pupils. For example, pupils are encouraged to talk with a partner to consolidate their learning and respond enthusiastically when they are required to take an active part in the sessions. Teachers have a better understanding of assessing pupils' work and supporting further learning through questions which probe and consolidate their skills. For instance, during the monitoring visit, pupils were observed responding enthusiastically to questions which assessed their understanding of how they compared life in an Indian village to that of their own in and around Middle Barton. The executive headteacher and the associate headteacher mentor those teachers who find particular aspects of their teaching challenging. The new subject leaders for mathematics are using pupil data well to highlight those pupils who are not achieving as well as they could. Recently acquired laptops have been put to good use by the teachers who use interesting computer programs to introduce lessons and provide a stimulus for learning. For example, in one lesson a fun game was used to assess whether younger pupils could tell the time. The recent training received by teaching assistants has helped them to understand their role within the classroom and this is enabling them to support both individuals and groups of pupils in a positive and productive way.

While there is evidence that the quality of marking is used well to identify the next steps that the pupils need to take, this is not yet a consistent feature through the school. The presentation of work in pupils' books remains inconsistent with some poor quality work that has been left unchallenged.

Progress since the last section 5 on the area for improvement.

- Improve the quality of teaching so that all pupils make at least satisfactory progress, and particularly in mathematics – satisfactory

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils report that, since January, the school has become a much happier place to learn and they really enjoy attending each day. Older pupils talk proud of the responsibilities they have been given which include preparing the hall for assembly and running an art club for younger children. The Year 6 pupils are permitted to sit on chairs during assembly and are particularly appreciative of this privileged

position. Pupils are much more interested in lessons because the themes chosen by their teachers, for example 'Global Gourmet', and 'Beast Creator', stimulate and motivate them. They talk enthusiastically about their educational trips to places, for example a butterfly farm, which are closely linked to the topics being covered in class. Parents and carers report that their children are more involved in school life and eagerly attend the new range of after-school clubs. Visitors into school note improvements in their behaviour and their attitudes to learning. School rules are clear and adhered to without question.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

By sharing their strong and effective leadership and management with Middle Barton, the executive headteacher and associate headteacher have created a firm foundation on which the school can rebuild itself. The school community has wholeheartedly welcomed this forward-thinking duo whose measured and calm approach has heralded in a new era of professionalism and openness. This has established a culture of honesty and trust and has enabled staff to focus on their core purpose as educators. Clarification of roles and responsibilities and clear expectations of teachers have provided consistency to approach and improved staff confidence. A specialist adviser from the local authority has ably taken over the role as the coordinator for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs. Consequently, systems and procedures have quickly improved. By identifying middle leaders who can develop the skills to monitor and evaluate key areas of the curriculum, the executive headteacher and associate headteacher are building capacity to improve within the school. Already improvements made to the balance and content of the curriculum have successfully engaged pupils who find it more meaningful. This is because topics such as 'Global Gourmet' and 'Pop-up' are chosen to stimulate them in their learning. Improvements to the provision for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs ensure greater equality of opportunity in school. This is because there are now careful systems in place to identify individual needs and provide appropriate support.

School improvement plans accurately reflect the needs of the school and a regular monitoring programme ensures that improvements to the quality of education are always at the top of the agenda. Self-evaluation is realistic and accurate. Governor training has enabled established members to gain a better understanding of their role. This has given them confidence to ask the appropriate questions of senior leaders. As a result, visits into school have a greater focus. New governors have brought expertise and improved levels of challenge by providing a fresh approach to the school.

Progress since the last section 5 on the area for improvement.

- Strengthen leadership and management at all levels – satisfactory

External support

The local authority statement of action meets requirements well. Local authority personnel provide a good level of challenge and support to the executive headteacher, the associate headteacher and members of the governing body. For example, through the part-time deployment of a local authority special needs adviser, the provision and leadership for disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs has improved. The governing body has benefited from an additional member who has brought high levels of expertise. Progress meetings between the executive headteacher and the associate headteacher and the local authority school improvement team are focused, purposeful and rigorous. The partnership with Bishop Loveday Primary School enables teaching staff at Middle Barton to access their expertise and develop their professional roles and responsibilities.