

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 0117 311 5373

Direct F 0117 315 0430

Direct email: jo-anne.harwood@tribalgroup.com

28 February 2013

Mrs Wendy Gibbins
Headteacher
Marshlands Primary School
Marshfoot Lane
Hailsham
BN27 2PH

Dear Mrs Gibbins

Special measures monitoring inspection of Marshlands Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 27 February 2013, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave during the inspection and for the time you made available to discuss the actions which have been taken since the school's recent section 5 inspection.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in October 2012.

Evidence

During this inspection, meetings were held with the headteacher and another member of the senior leadership team, the Chair of the Interim Executive Board, and a representative of the local authority. The local authority's statement of action, the plan for consultant support and the school's improvement plan were evaluated.

Context

Two teachers have left the school since the inspection. The governing body was replaced by an Interim Executive Board (IEB) towards the end of January 2013. The local authority is exploring options for the school to become a sponsored academy.

The quality of leadership and management at the school

The local authority was quick to respond to the recommendation to improve governance quickly. It took prompt action to apply to the Secretary of State to constitute an IEB and has appointed an experienced Chair. The headteacher has communicated to staff what is being expected in all lessons in terms of teachers' planning and marking, the pace of learning and the way that pupils will present their work. Senior leaders are working closely with a range of consultants from the local authority, who have carried out many visits since the school was judged to require special measures. To date, these have mainly provided advice and guidance for the school on how to improve pupils' reading, writing and mathematics. Appropriate work is under way to check that teachers are assessing pupils' attainment in reading, writing and mathematics accurately.

The consultants' plan and the school's improvement plan do not provide a strong enough basis for ensuring the school is removed from special measures. They are not precise enough about the planned actions to tackle the significant weaknesses in teaching, pupils' achievement and, particularly, leadership and management. It is not clear, for example, what is being done to identify the pupils in Years 1 to 6 who have underachieved in reading, writing and mathematics, and, specifically, what will be done to help these pupils make rapid, accelerated progress. Similarly, the plans are not precise enough about how senior leaders will be helped to evaluate, accurately and robustly, the quality of teaching and pupils' progress.

The plans lack specific and measurable criteria to help leaders, members of the IEB and the local authority check that the planned actions are having a demonstrable impact on improving the school's effectiveness. There are not enough interim check points, with measurable criteria, during the period between January and July 2013 to make sure that actions are having the intended impact. Some deadlines are set too far in the future: for example, November 2013 is the intended date by which leaders' analysis of pupils' progress will be 'clear and reliable' and the school's self-evaluation 'accurate'. These are crucial aspects to leadership and need to be securely in place well before November. The arrangements for monitoring the effectiveness of the improvement plan are too vague and the role of the IEB in monitoring and evaluating the plan is not indicated.

Following the monitoring inspection, these judgements were made:

The local authority statement of action is fit for purpose.

The school's improvement plan is not fit for purpose.

The school may not appoint newly qualified teachers before the next monitoring inspection.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Interim Executive Board, the Director of Children's Services for East Sussex. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Margaret Dickinson
Her Majesty's Inspector