

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 5323
Direct email: suzy.smith@triblagroup.com



7 May 2013

Mrs A Thorne
Headteacher
Longcause Community Special School
Longcause
Plymouth
Plympton
PL7 1JB

Dear Mrs Thorne

Requires improvement monitoring inspection visit under section 8 of the Education Act 2005 to Longcause Community Special School, Plymouth

This letter is to confirm in writing the outcomes of our discussions and my judgements following my visit to Longcause School on 7 May 2013. Thank you for all the help you gave me during my visit, the meetings you arranged and the documentation provided to demonstrate the impact of the actions taken since the last section 5 inspection in January 2013.

Evidence

During my visit, I had extensive discussions with the deputy headteacher and yourself. As you know, I met separately with three governors and four members of staff.

Context

There have been no significant changes to staff or the school's organisation since the section 5 inspection.

Main findings

You, the governing body and senior leaders have been resolute in the pursuit of raising students' achievements and improving their behaviour management. The prudent spending of funds has been used well to maximise the professional development opportunities for all staff by targeting individuals' learning needs and the school's areas for improvement. For example, key staff have undertaken specific external training courses, such as 'The Outstanding Teacher, and 'Kagan Teaching'. They have started to share what they have learned with other staff and this is

beginning to help create a greater consistency in teaching methodology. Other whole-school staff training sessions, often delivered by leading national practitioners, have also ensured improvements. For example, lesson planning has improved and builds upon what the students have, or have not, learnt in the previous lessons. The informal 'drop-in' monitoring of lessons by senior staff is helping you to determine that the actions that have been taken are leading to improved student progress. The interaction between adults and students has been an important focus. You have been able to conclude that adults are letting students try more things out for themselves, increasing student independence and resilience. An interesting development has been the highly effective use of video footage to share best practise. Staff are using this well to analyse their own and each other's work in a constructive and developmental way. You are aware that teaching is not yet consistently good. However, the actions you have taken to secure improvement have been the right ones, in the right order and in good time.

You have acted quickly to clarify the policies and practices for dealing with the most challenging students' behaviour. Following a careful evaluation and review of behaviour management methods the school has strong evidence showing that they are working well and reducing the number of challenging incidents occurring.

The school's improvement plan is well-ordered and focussed on the key areas for improvement. The use of a colour code helps you and others to see when the actions taken have met the success criteria within the planned time scale. All but a very few actions have been successfully completed within the tight parameters that you set yourself. You have sensibly drawn upon the excellent relationships that you have built locally, for example through the visits to other local schools to pool and share expertise. You have also wisely planned for several staff to visit an outstanding special school to enable them to further review planning formats for individuals with complex needs.

Senior leaders and governors are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection.

Ofsted will continue to monitor the school until its next section 5 inspection.

External support

The school is very effectively drawing upon external support through successful funding bids from the local authority to pay for the training and continued professional development of staff. The use of an external advisor has helped the senior leadership team to evaluate the impact of teaching on learning more sharply. In particular, the measurement of the impact that additional adults have in class on student's learning is more robust and has highlighted further training and development needs for particular staff.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Plymouth.

Yours sincerely

Steffi Penny

Her Majesty's Inspector