

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 5359
Direct F 0117 315 0430
Email: christina.bannerman@tribalgroup.com

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Mrs Steph Guthrie
Acting Executive Headteacher
Madginford Park Junior School
Egremont Road
Bearsted
Maidstone
Kent
ME15 8LH

Dear Mrs Guthrie

Special measures monitoring inspection of Madginford Park Junior School

Following my visit to your school on 13 February 2014, 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 that 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 that took place in October 2013.

Evidence

During this inspection I held meetings with you and the acting head of school, the Chair of the Governing Body and another governor, and the Chair of the Governing Body of the infant school. I also held a meeting with a representative from the local authority. The local authority's statement of action and the school's improvement plans were evaluated.

Context

Since the last inspection the school has entered into a consultation process to close the junior school and amalgamate it with the outstanding infant school on the same site. The headteacher of the infant school has become executive headteacher of both the infant and the junior schools. The school has appointed a local authority adviser, who was seconded to the school, to be head of school for the junior school

in order to boost leadership capacity. Three new teaching staff, including a seconded assistant headteacher, have joined the school with two teachers leaving. The executive headteacher has resigned from the school to take up another headship and will be leaving at the end of this academic year. The Chair of the Governing Body has resigned and has been replaced by the Vice-Chair. Four other governors have left the governing body.

The quality of leadership and management at the school

You and your senior team have made a good start to tackling the concerns raised in the last inspection. You are systematically tackling all aspects of the work of the school that need to be better, and some progress is already evident.

For example, the school has rigorously monitored the quality of teaching with local authority support. An intensive teacher training programme has been put in place, and teachers have observed outstanding practice in other schools. The best teachers are working closely with their peers on aspects of planning and teaching to boost the quality and consistency across the school. As a result, recent monitoring of the school's work has shown that the quality of teaching is improving. There is now a higher proportion of teaching that is good when compared to the last inspection.

Better teaching and intervention work are boosting pupils' progress across the school. Mathematics progress, which had been poor, has accelerated across all year groups. However, a legacy of slow progress before the last inspection means that despite improved rates of progress many pupils are still behind in their learning. A new more structured approach to cross-curricular writing has been piloted in Year 4 and this has significantly enhanced pupils' writing skills and levels of engagement. Plans are in place to replicate this success with other year groups.

The local authority is providing good support to the school's leaders and governors. For example, advisers are working closely with middle leaders and governors to increase leadership capacity. After taking advice from the local authority, the governing body has decided not to commission an external review of governance. This is due to plans to dissolve the junior school's governing body when the infant and junior schools amalgamate. There will be a review of the governing body once the new primary school comes into existence.

The planning and delivery of the statement of action and the school's improvement plans have been a collaborative process between you, your senior leaders and the local authority. The statement of action and the school's plans tackle all of the areas of the school that require improvement. These documents provide clear baselines about provision and outcomes; they have sensible success criteria and clear targets, so that improvement over time can be measured. The monitoring of action plans by leaders and governors is providing good initial information about progress and where

improvements have yet to fully come to fruition. You, your senior leaders, the local authority and governors have a clearly defined monitoring and evaluation cycle. You and the local authority are aware that there should be infant school governor representation on the School Improvement Board of monitoring governors, and you are planning for this to happen.

A parents' meeting has been held. Although parents and carers are concerned about the outcome of the inspection, most demonstrated strong support for the school at the meeting and through their responses to Ofsted's on-line questionnaire Parent View. Plans are in place to consult regularly and more formally with parents and carers. This is to enable leaders and governors to systematically gather the opinions of parents and carers about the improvements being made at the school, and for this to coincide with the school's half termly monitoring.

Following the monitoring inspection the following judgements were made:

The local authority's statement of action is fit for purpose

The school's improvement plans are 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 Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Kent. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Peter Gale

Additional Inspector