

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

14 March 2014

Mr D Vallier
The Headteacher
Telscombe Cliffs Community Primary School
Telscombe Cliffs Way
Telscombe Cliffs
Peacehaven
BN10 7DE

Dear Mr Vallier

Special measures monitoring inspection of Telscombe Cliffs Community Primary School

Following my visit with Juliet Ward, Additional Inspector to your school on 12 and 13 March 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 which have been taken since the school's previous monitoring inspection.

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

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time:
the school is making reasonable progress towards the removal of special measures.

The school may appoint one newly qualified teacher before the next monitoring inspection.

This letter and monitoring inspection report will be published 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 East Sussex.

Yours sincerely

Robin Hammerton
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in October 2012

- Improve teaching by making sure that:
 - teachers have sufficient subject knowledge in writing and mathematics to be able to adapt plans and respond quickly to pupils' needs in lessons
 - the pace of lessons is always good, pupils are engaged in their work and are moved on quickly to their next steps in learning
 - teachers ask questions that deepen pupils' understanding and involve pupils of all abilities
 - pupils have more opportunities to use and apply their mathematical skills in other subjects
 - all pupils make good progress from their starting points by setting work that always matches their needs and abilities, especially for the less able pupils, disabled pupils and those who need extra support with their learning.

- Improve the impact of leaders and managers by:
 - ensuring that plans for improvement include regular opportunities to check and measure the impact of the action taken
 - making regular checks on the quality of teaching and ensuring that points for improving teaching are followed up with teachers
 - developing the skills of all staff with leadership roles so that they can contribute fully to making the school better
 - making better use of information about pupils' progress and attainment to accurately evaluate what works well and what needs to be improved
 - providing the governing body with accessible information about the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement so that it can fully understand the school's strengths and weaknesses in order to better hold leaders to account
 - undertaking an external review of governance.

Report on the fourth monitoring inspection on 12 and 13 March 2014

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and spoke with the headteacher, other senior and middle leaders, governors, pupils, and representatives from the local authority. They observed several lessons, some jointly with senior staff, as well as playtimes and two assemblies. They scrutinised pupils' work and listened to pupils reading. They evaluated key documents, including the school improvement plan, minutes of meetings, school self-evaluations, teachers' plans and local authority reports about the school. Inspectors took account of the 15 responses of parents to the Parent View questionnaire on the Ofsted website.

Context

A new assistant headteacher, responsible for English, joined the school in January 2014. Some classes are taught by temporary staff, as a result of illness or maternity cover.

Achievement of pupils at the school

Pupils' achievement in English and mathematics continues to improve notably. In lessons, pupils are confident in discussing their work. Their use of vocabulary is improving and widening, and this is better encouraged by all staff. Pupils enjoy mathematical investigations which help them to develop their understanding. In a Year 6 lesson, pupils made excellent progress in collecting information and interpreting graphs about the Kalahari. The school expects that the reasonable mathematics and English results in Years 2 and 6, achieved in 2013, will be at least sustained this year, whilst also recognising that these are not yet as high as they should be.

As a result of the recent improvement work by all staff, the tasks set for pupils in English and mathematics are more consistently well matched to the needs of different groups of pupils. Higher attaining pupils, and some boys, found at the last monitoring inspection to need some extra support, are doing better. Disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, or who are entitled to the support of the pupil premium, continue to do as well as their peers. Pupil premium money is carefully targeted by the school. This, and its link to pupils' achievement, is well explained by the school to parents on its website. The need now is for the attainment of all pupils, together, to continue to rise.

In the Early Years Foundation Stage, children are confident to join in well-organised learning activities. Inspectors noted, in particular, their assurance and skill in using phonics (linking letters and sounds) for single letters and when two letters together make a single sound (such as 'ai' within 'train'). Inspectors heard pupils from Years 1 and 2 read. These pupils also showed strong phonic knowledge to read correctly initial letter sounds and blends, 'sounding out' some complex words. They made

some use of pictures and the context of what they were reading to help their understanding of the texts. The school keeps thorough records and accurate assessments of pupils' reading; these are contributed to helpfully by parents.

The pupils' singing has improved further. In a whole-school assembly observed, it was controlled and accurate. This work, led by a knowledgeable new teacher, could be developed by expanding the repertoire, using notation with the pupils and making more use of unaccompanied singing.

The key weakness in pupils' attainment and progress remains in the foundation subjects – those outside of English and mathematics. Despite some improvement, pupils are still not doing well enough in these subjects. There are many examples of this; for instance, in physical education, although pupils enjoyed a lesson observed and were safe and well looked after, their skill in balancing in pairs was weak and they made little progress.

The quality of teaching

Teaching continues to improve in English and mathematics lessons across the school. Lessons are generally calm and well paced, with pupils keen to try new ideas and challenge their own thinking. Teachers know the subject matter well. Consequently, they are confident in giving interesting and purposeful lessons, explaining things clearly and asking searching and pertinent questions which help pupils, at different levels of attainment, to think for themselves. Year 1 pupils learned well when they presented the life cycle of a dragon in groups. The lesson met their different needs well, helped them to use and understand grammar and vocabulary, such as adjectives, and prepared them for a writing task. Senior teachers teach particularly well in English and mathematics. They provide good role models and mentors for their colleagues.

Where teaching requires improvement in English and mathematics, it is usually when teachers do not allow pupils sufficient time to think for themselves and do too much of the thinking for them. In some lessons, teachers need to become more confident to 'let go' and stop themselves answering the questions they have asked of the pupils.

The marking of pupils' work has improved considerably. In many cases, teachers mark pupils' work incisively and very helpfully, with pupils making improvements to their work directly as a result. Helpful verbal feedback in many lessons by adults, along with clear targets and objectives for pupils' learning, all help pupils to understand their work and learning.

Teaching in the subjects beyond English and mathematics remains far less well developed. This is because teachers are much less sure about the distinctive characteristics of each subject, with little guidance currently available to them. The 'learning journeys', introduced by the school, provide a useful and interesting structure for the whole curriculum, but the teaching and learning in these subjects lack depth.

Following the last monitoring visit, the headteacher has sensibly agreed a dress code with staff. At this monitoring visit, the professional bearing and smartness of staff were proper and correct, and an improvement on what was presented before. Similarly, in respect of the physical environment of the school, classrooms, corridors, halls and outdoor areas are tidy, well organised and stimulating for the pupils.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils continue to behave well. They enjoy school and feel well looked after and safe. They cooperate well together in lessons, showing sensitivity, kindness and respect to each other. This is encouraged well by staff inside and outside of lessons. Pupils enjoy the way that adults lead some activities at playtimes. The school council makes useful suggestions on behalf of all pupils. There are very occasional outbursts of poor behaviour, which are well managed including by the use of very short exclusions. Pupils' attendance rate is about average. Systems for promoting attendance are suitably organised.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

The headteacher provides very clear and inventive leadership, as well as a sense of fun and enjoyment, which has gained the trust and commitment of staff. He is successfully raising expectations and improving consistency across the school. The school improvement plan is well organised and effective in providing realistic, but challenging, objectives. The headteacher has made recent staff appointments with great care and, so far, those who have joined are contributing very well. Effective teamwork is strengthening.

The two deputy headteachers both continue to develop their well-defined roles very effectively. As a result, their areas of responsibility, which include behaviour, special educational needs and assessment information, are well managed. Information about pupils' progress is much better used in English and mathematics lessons to provide work that is set correctly for pupils' needs. Planning and assessment in the three Reception classes are much more consistently done. School self-evaluation is accurate. However, although the school evaluates teaching correctly, it has not collated a sharp enough analysis of the main strengths and weaknesses in teaching to give the maximum guidance for future improvement work.

Leadership in mathematics and English is improving well. These subject leaders receive appropriate training and support, know their subjects inside out and are supporting staff effectively in raising expectations and improving the curriculum and teaching. One of these leaders is the newly-appointed assistant headteacher, who is ready to assume temporarily further responsibilities during the forthcoming maternity leave of a deputy headteacher.

However, middle leadership as a whole, especially of all other subjects, remains insufficiently effective. This is a deep-seated problem and it explains why expectations and pupils' attainment are too low across the curriculum. Nevertheless,

this is changing. There are now clear signs of improvement, albeit at an early stage. The first phase of a bespoke training programme for subject leaders has given them a much clearer idea of their responsibilities, accountability and the actions needed to improve the quality of curriculum and teaching in their areas, in order to speed up pupils' progress. The subject leaders, for their part, are working hard and are keen to develop their skills. In most cases, they need to learn more about the specific issues and features of the subject they lead. Newly qualified teachers are also usefully involved, so that they are better prepared for their future work. Quite correctly, subject leaders are ensuring that the work of visiting staff (for example in physical education) is included in their evaluation and thinking. The question for the school is how quickly this developmental work with subject leaders can make a notable positive impact on the progress and attainment of pupils across the curriculum.

Still well led by its co-Chairs, the governing body knows the school in detail and takes a clear strategic view of its needs and development. Procedures for safeguarding pupils are managed effectively. Governors continue to ask pertinent questions of senior staff, but recognise that sometimes these questions, and their follow up queries, need to be more searching. They plan to reconstitute the governing body to make it more efficient.

External support

Local authority consultants continue to provide useful advice and support. For example, the work explained above with subject leaders has begun well. However, the local authority has not followed up adequately the suggestion from the last monitoring visit to involve more of its senior officers in evaluating the school whilst it is in special measures. The local authority does not check formally with senior staff and governors in sufficient depth or frequently enough that the school's improvement actions are effective. Despite its much improving leadership, this leaves the school more exposed to misfortune than it should be at a crucial time in its development.

Priorities for further improvement

- Continue to develop very rapidly the management skills and subject-specific knowledge of staff responsible for foundation subjects, so that they can ensure that the curriculum and lessons in these subjects become much richer and deeper.
- Establish a monitoring group for the school including a senior local authority officer, the headteacher, senior staff, the local adviser, and representative governors. This should meet to evaluate the school's progress, and minute its findings, at least monthly while the school remains in special measures.