

Tribal  
1-4 Portland Square  
Bristol  
BS2 8RR

T 0300 123 1231  
Text Phone: 0161 6188524  
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk  
[www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

**Direct T** 0117 311 5359  
**Email:** christina.bannerman@tribalgroup.com

30 April 2014

Mrs Lisa Moorhouse  
Headteacher  
Emerson Valley School  
Hodder Lane  
Emerson Valley  
Milton Keynes  
Buckinghamshire  
MK4 2JR

Dear Mrs Moorhouse

### **Serious weaknesses monitoring inspection of Emerson Valley School**

Following my visit to your school on 29 April 2014, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the outcome and findings of the inspection. 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 third monitoring inspection since the school was judged to have serious weaknesses following the section 5 inspection which took place in January 2013. 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 the serious weaknesses designation.

This letter and monitoring inspection report will be published on the Ofsted website. I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Milton Keynes.

Yours sincerely

Sue Barkway  
**Additional Inspector**

## Annex

### The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in January 2013

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it is at least good by:
  - improving the teaching of phonics (linking sounds and letters) so that disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs, in particular, make better progress in reading and writing
  - teachers taking more direct responsibility for the progress of pupils who find learning difficult and effectively overseeing the work of teaching assistants
  - ensuring there are more opportunities for pupils to apply their ICT skills in other subjects
  - ensuring teachers adopt similar strategies in helping pupils to learn words which they use frequently but spell wrongly
  - improving teachers' understanding of how pupils are progressing so they can give them harder work when they need it.
  
- Raise pupils' achievement in reading, writing and mathematics by:
  - developing in pupils a love of reading by getting pupils to talk more to each other about books and stories they have read
  - improving pupils' comprehension skills, especially in looking more deeply and carefully at the meaning of the text they read
  - helping pupils to remember mathematical vocabulary by providing more visual support for them on classroom walls and in their books
  - providing more opportunities for pupils to apply their mathematical skills to real-life settings.
  
- Improve leadership and management by:
  - ensuring that the annual reviews of teachers' performance carried out by all school leaders are clearly linked to the progress pupils are making so that the teachers' success in meeting their targets can be measured
  - developing more rigorous systems to check that the action taken to improve teaching and pupils' achievements is working
  - taking effective action to settle the long-standing staffing difficulties.

## **Report on the third monitoring inspection on 29 April 2014**

### **Evidence**

The inspector met with the senior leadership team, the Chair of the Governing Body and a representative from the local authority. She observed five parts of lessons, all of which were joint observations with a member of the school leadership team, and carried out a learning walk in Years 5 and 6. The inspector also looked at pupils' work and school documentation, including pupil progress information, bullying, accident and behaviour logs and the school's central record of checks on staff.

### **Context**

Since the last monitoring inspection, there have been significant changes to the teaching staff in the school. Three teachers, including two year group leaders, have left and an additional two teachers are on maternity leave. An internal appointment was made for a new year group leader. Other posts are covered by three supply teachers and two teachers on fixed-term contracts.

### **The quality of leadership and management at the school**

Despite significant changes in staffing, there is evidence of steady progress since the last monitoring inspection. The quality of teaching is improving, particularly for those teachers who have been in the school since September. There is no inadequate teaching and the proportion of teaching which is good or better is much higher than it was at the beginning of this academic year. Similarly, evidence from pupils' work in books, as well as the school's information on the achievement of pupils currently in the school, indicate that progress is speeding up. For example, during this academic year, almost all pupils are making good or better progress from their starting points. Nevertheless, the predictions for end of Key Stage outcomes in 2014 indicate that there are unlikely to be significant improvements from 2013, despite the faster progress made by pupils in Year 6 during this academic year in reading and mathematics.

Members of the senior leadership team have a good understanding of the strengths of the school, the progress that has been made and the next steps for development. Year group leaders have received training and support for their role and have a greater awareness of what is expected of them. It is now important that senior leaders and year group leaders work together as a team to ensure that agreed strategies for improvement are implemented with urgency and monitored regularly to ensure consistency and impact of the actions taken.

The governing body provides an appropriate level of challenge and support. Governors demonstrate a very good understanding of school information on pupils' progress and use this well to ask questions or to support decision making. They have recognised capacity issues in the senior leadership team caused by changes to

staffing, resulting in the need for members of the leadership team to provide additional support in classrooms. As a consequence, a consultant commissioned by the local authority is now working for three days a week in the school to help to strengthen the leadership team until the staffing issues are resolved.

### **Strengths in the school's approaches to securing improvement:**

- There is rigorous tracking of the progress made by pupils, including careful identification of individual and groups of pupils who are not making enough progress. The information is detailed and clearly presented. As a result, the school is in a good position to demonstrate improvements in achievement, as well as to identify trends and concerns at an early stage.
- Strategies to improve attendance and punctuality have been highly successful. Attendance is now above the national average and there has been a significant decrease in the number of pupils who arrive late at school.
- A programme of training and additional support, combined with revised procedures for performance management, has been effective in improving the quality of teaching.
- In an increasing proportion of lessons, teachers' on-going checks on pupils' progress help to ensure that work is at the right level for different groups of pupils and to identify misconceptions or errors in pupils' understanding. When this happens, pupils have a good understanding of how they can improve their work and their learning is accelerated.
- Pupils are encouraged to use subject-specific vocabulary when talking about their work and, as a result, they use technical language accurately and with understanding.
- There are more opportunities for pupils to read and talk about books, as well as to improve their spelling. However, it is important that the school ensures that all of this time is used well so that tasks are purposeful and focused on the next steps in learning.
- In all lessons, the behaviour of pupils is good. They are keen to learn, listen attentively and focus well when working independently.
- The school logs and records actions taken when there are accidents, incidents of bullying and behavioural issues. The school's central record of checks on staff is up to date. It shows that all required checks have been made and recorded.

### **Weaknesses in the school's approaches to securing improvement:**

- Progress in writing in Year 6 is slower than in other subject areas. The school needs to ensure that interventions are well targeted to pupils' needs so that this progress is accelerated.
- Although a revised policy for marking was introduced in the autumn term, this is not yet fully embedded or implemented consistently.
- There is insufficient rigour in monitoring the implementation and impact of strategies. For example, as yet, senior and year group leaders do not work

together regularly enough to support planning, monitor teaching or to evaluate the quality of work and marking in pupils' books.

### **External support**

The local authority is providing good support to the school. For example, the School Improvement Partner visits the schools regularly and, through her knowledge and understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school, is able to challenge as well as help in the identification of next steps for development. The school has benefited from support from the neighbouring teaching school, which was brokered by the local authority. In addition, the leadership consultant commissioned by the local authority, is working effectively with the senior leadership team and providing increased capacity in the leadership team.