

Tribal Group
1-4 Portland
Square
Bristol
BS2 8RR
T 0845 123 6001
F 0845 123 6002

T 08456 40 40 40
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk



19 November 2007

Mr P Wright
The Headteacher
Barley Lane School
Barley Lane
St Thomas
Exeter
Devon
EX4 1TA

Dear Mr Wright

SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF BARLEY LANE SCHOOL

Following my visit to your school on 7 November 2007, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the third monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures in September 2006. The monitoring inspection report is attached and the main judgements are set out below.

Progress since being subject to special measures – good.

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – good.

Newly qualified teachers may not be appointed.

This letter and monitoring inspection report will be posted on the Ofsted website. Please inform the Regional Inspection Service Provider of any factual inaccuracies within 24 hours of the receipt of this letter.

I am copying this letter and the monitoring inspection report to the Secretary of State, the chair of governors and the Director of Children's Services for Devon.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Steffi Penny". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Steffi Penny
Her Majesty's Inspector

SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING OF BARLEY LANE SCHOOL

Report from the third monitoring inspection: 7 November 2007

Evidence

The inspector observed the school's work, scrutinised documents, and met with the headteacher, assistant headteacher, pupils, representatives from the local authority (LA) and talked with the chair of governors.

Context

Following a fifth national recruitment attempt, the governors have been able to appoint a substantive headteacher. He will lead the school from January 2008. There are now no primary aged pupils in the school. At the time of the monitoring visit major internal building works were underway in what had been an accommodation wing.

The ventilation in the design and technology resistant material room is inadequate.

Achievement and standards

The progress that pupils make in all subjects is now being regularly recorded. Where lessons use practical inputs, are topic based and use a variety of teaching styles and interesting resources, achievement based on where the pupil started, is good. Standards are well below those expected nationally for the age of the pupils.

Teachers are using the information they have to plan their lessons and to help them make tasks meet the needs of all abilities. The new changes to the curriculum are improving the standards reached by the least able. However, the most able pupils are still not challenged enough and too often the standard and amount of work completed by an individual is not sufficiently predetermined by the teacher. This is because staff do not sufficiently share with pupils the smaller steps that they need to make in their learning.

Pupils are aware of the longer term targets that teachers have set for them. These targets are based on the relevant subject levels in the National Curriculum. Tracking records show that there is a wide variety in the proportion of pupils meeting their targets in each subject. The school is aware that target setting needs significant revision to ensure that the targets set are appropriate for individual subjects. The school has and will continue to provide opportunities to moderate pupils' work against that of pupils in other schools to ensure that the levels they give are accurate. Subject leaders have found this to be very useful.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in September 2006:

- ensure that pupils can achieve and make progress in all subjects through improving the effectiveness of teaching and the guidance given to them – satisfactory.

Personal development and well-being

Since January 2007 no pupil has been excluded and attendance, although still not good enough, is improving. The use of the 'catch up room' continues to provide an immediate solution when behaviour is such that a lesson cannot continue and its use still does not hinder pupils returning to class. Nevertheless, monitoring of what learning takes place when pupils are in 'catch-up' is not sharp enough.

The use of tokens as a reward continues to work well and pupils' attitudes to school are improving as a result. The residential trip to Cornwall, the camping trip and regular sporting fixtures have increased pupils' enjoyment as well as helping them make better social interactions and involvement within the school community. The school is at an early stage with its involvement with the wider community. However, as pupils show more respect and consideration for others they have been able to engage in some voluntary activities with a local primary school and have invited local residents to visit the school for an open hour. As most pupils do not live in the local area this provides opportunities for them to appreciate different aspects of British society.

In Key Stage 4 the increased range of the curriculum provision is having a good impact on pupils' behaviour and social skills, as well as helping them prepare for the next stages of learning and the world of work. The school has yet to exploit these opportunities for learning to support integrated work across the curriculum for all year groups.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in September 2006:

- improve the systems to support and guide pupils in their personal development, particularly in improving their behaviour – good.

Quality of provision

Teaching continues to improve and the focus in lessons is far more related to learning than behaviour management. Support staff are used well to help pupils learn. In the lessons seen the pupils generally behaved well and completed their given work. The resources that were used were sometimes not very exciting and the reason for doing the work was not clearly re-emphasised throughout the lesson. All staff need to see examples of outstanding teaching in the different curriculum areas.

The quality of lesson plans has improved with more emphasis on identifying work and activities to meet individual needs. Targets are shared with pupils and are displayed on classroom walls. These targets are hard to read because they are in too small a print, particularly for weak readers, and sometimes the walls have too many displays on them so that pupils cannot focus on the targets properly.

The school started its current academic year two weeks before the end of the summer term. This helped pupils to settle into their new classes with their new tutors. At the same time, the school took the opportunity to restructure its classes, the result being that all pupils are now in year groups with no split year classes. This

has helped staff to be more aware of what pupils should be doing, and achieving, in relation to their age.

Since the last visit, literacy has become an even higher priority, especially in Key Stage 3, where all pupils have a daily literacy lesson. Those pupils who have been identified as having reading ages below seven years are timetabled for one to one support. Extra staff support has also been added to over half of the English lessons. Pupils who are experiencing significant difficulties with mathematics are also given extra support. The impact of these changes is difficult to quantify at this time but they have placed the most vulnerable learners in a more supportive learning environment and the capacity for improvement is good.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in September 2006:

- ensuring that pupils are safe and that incidents of unacceptable behaviour are recorded properly – good.

Leadership and management

The atmosphere in the school is friendly and calm. There is a much greater sense of purpose and order about each day to which pupils have responded well. The interim headteacher and deputy have done a very good job in getting the school back on track; staff have indicated that they will be missed. They will depart from the school at the end of the autumn term but leave a very good foundation for the new substantive headteacher to build upon. This is because they have stabilised the school, made sure that learning is the heart of lessons and that good or appropriate behaviour is rewarded. They have been appropriately pragmatic in their approach by not introducing too many changes to detail that are best left to the new substantive headteacher and his senior leadership team.

The school community can now see the way forward and the part that each person can play to make this a good school. For example, middle managers now have a greater understanding of how they can shape the school; subject leaders are now thinking about ways in which they can take learning forward; and, support staff are more involved with learning rather than containing behaviour.

A significant aspect of the very good leadership and management of the interim leadership team has been the sharing of developments so that all staff have had the opportunity to say how they think things can be improved. This has been done through questionnaires and monitoring. In an effort to sustain the improvements in the school, teaching is being monitored well and not just by the senior leadership team and local authority. More use could be made of the views of pupils and classroom support staff to help other staff understand what works best for learning and why.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in September 2006:

- establish more effective leadership and management to ensure that the school is monitored, evaluated and improved – good.

External support

The local authority provides good support, both through its monitoring process and the intervention of subject consultants. It will need to continue working with, and support, the governing body and the new substantive headteacher.

Priorities for further improvement

No additional priorities were identified during this visit.