

Suite 22
West Lancashire Investment Centre
Maple View
White Moss Business Park
Skelmersdale
WN8 9TG

T 0300 123 1231
Text Phone: 0161 6188524 **Direct T** 01695 566934
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk **Direct F** 01695 729320
www.ofsted.gov.uk **Direct email:** gtunnicliffe@cfbt.com



11 November 2010

Mr Richard Thompson
Headteacher
Sherdley Primary School
Mill Lane
Sutton
St Helens
Merseyside
WA9 4HA

Dear Mr Thompson

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Sherdley Primary School

Following my inspection with Sarah Drake, Additional Inspector, to your school on 9 and 10 November 2010, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings.

The inspection was the second monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in November 2009. 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 and the main judgements are set out below.

Progress since being subject to special measures – **inadequate**

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – **satisfactory**

Newly Qualified Teachers may not be appointed.

This letter and monitoring inspection report will be posted 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 St Helens.

Yours sincerely

Stephen Wall
Additional Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in November 2009

- Raise pupils' achievement in English, mathematics and science by ensuring that:
 - inadequate teaching is eradicated
 - the assessment of pupils' progress is accurate
 - the curriculum fully matches the needs and abilities of all pupils
 - teachers spend sufficient time teaching to make an impact on pupils' learning.
- Improve the quality of self-evaluation by:
 - ensuring that senior leaders make good use of the data available to set the school's priorities for improvement and to check the effectiveness of their actions against the outcomes achieved by pupils
 - communicating the school's priorities effectively to all staff
 - ensuring that agreed policies and actions are adhered to consistently
 - evaluating the impact of teachers' management time against the outcomes achieved by pupils
 - ensuring that the governing body receives information which accurately reflects the school's progress against the key priorities for improvement.
- Improve equality of opportunity for all pupils by:
 - ensuring that all pupils make at least satisfactory progress during their time in school.

Special measures: monitoring of Sherdley Primary School

Report from the second monitoring inspection on 9 and 10 November 2010

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, subject coordinators, a group of pupils, a representative of the governing body and representatives from the local authority.

Context

The new headteacher took up post in September 2010. A new teacher in the Early Years Foundation Stage also took up post in that month following the retirement of the previous incumbent.

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning

The unvalidated 2010 assessment data for Key Stage 1 and 2 show that pupils' attainment declined significantly, especially in English, mathematics and science in Key Stage 2. Here the proportion of pupils attaining the expected and higher levels was significantly below the 2009 national average and attainment levels of previous years. The attainment of pupils known to be eligible for free school meals was lower than that of other groups of pupils in comparison to national averages. Overall, pupils did not achieve as well as they should have given their broadly average starting points. The school's targets and predictions for attainment were missed by a wide margin. Inadequate achievement identified in the inspection report of November 2009 has declined even further.

Since the previous monitoring inspection, new leadership has injected a much-needed sense of urgency into tackling the root causes of the school's legacy of underachievement. Many new strategies have been introduced including, for example:

- improving the quality of teaching by more robust monitoring and a sharply focused programme of professional development for staff
- a much more robust system for tracking pupils' progress towards demanding targets
- significantly improving arrangements for moderating standards both in school and by involving the local authority and a local school
- ensuring that teachers spend sufficient time with their classes to avoid unnecessary disruption to pupils' learning.

These initiatives are at an early stage and their full impact has yet to be felt. However, there are early signs that they are starting to have the desired effect on

raising attainment and enabling pupils to make the progress of which they are capable. For example: the proportion of good teaching has increased significantly since the previous monitoring inspection and no inadequate teaching was observed during the monitoring inspection; staff are fully aware of targets for pupils' attainment and progress in their classes; and new procedures for performance management of staff ensure a strong link with pupils' progress to hold teachers more rigorously to account for the progress of pupils in their classes. Lesson observations during the monitoring inspection show that the level of challenge for pupils is rising and that pupils are becoming more actively involved in their learning. Behaviour continues to improve as does pupils' enjoyment. While much remains to be done, as the school's leaders fully recognise, these positive examples show that the school is moving in the right direction and with the necessary sense of urgency to improve achievement.

Progress since the last inspection on the area for improvement:

- raise pupils' achievement in English, mathematics and science – **satisfactory.**

Other relevant pupil outcomes

The improvement in attendance identified at the previous monitoring inspection has been maintained. Attendance is in line with the national average. Figures for persistent absence continue to decline. Behaviour is also improving. Pupils are responding positively to teaching that is more purposeful and varied, with the result that there are fewer instances of off-task chatter and a greater degree of concentration. Pupils are enjoying the increased number of opportunities to take on responsibilities in school. The school council and eco council, for example, are influential bodies that have brought about significant improvements, such as the establishment of the new 'eco garden'. The introduction of themed events such as the recent cultural week is also proving popular; they are adding significantly to pupils' enjoyment and cultural awareness. Pupils are proud that the school recently gained the Artsmark Gold Award. The school has improved arrangements for pupils' safety. A thorough audit of safety has been conducted and necessary steps taken to secure the school site. Pupils say that they feel very safe in school as a result.

The effectiveness of provision

Provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage is moving on at a good pace. Since the previous monitoring inspection the physical environment in the Nursery and Reception areas has been reorganised and rationalised, both indoors and outside, to provide a more stimulating environment for learning. New procedures for tracking children's progress, designed to show it with greater clarity and highlight areas for

development, have been introduced. These are starting to give a more accurate picture of children's needs and progress.

The quality of teaching is improving. The proportion of good teaching is growing. Teaching is becoming more confident and purposeful. The new common format for lesson planning is becoming embedded and is providing much clearer learning objectives for each lesson. Teachers are starting to use assessment and tracking information in their planning to match tasks more closely to the needs and abilities of different groups of learners. However, inconsistencies remain; in a few lessons tasks are either too easy or too difficult for different groups. Teaching is making more effective use of group and pair work to involve pupils more actively in their own learning and encourage their skills as independent learners. In most, but not all classes, teachers are using questioning more effectively to encourage pupils to think carefully about problems and justify their answers. The pace of teaching is improving as is the variety of activities with which children are presented. This is engaging pupils more actively and adding to their enjoyment. Marking of pupils' work is regular but the quality, although improving overall, remains inconsistent in making clear to pupils what they need to do to improve their work. Pupils' awareness and understanding of their targets are growing. They refer regularly to the cards each of them receives on which their personalised targets for improvement are printed.

The curriculum is continuing to evolve to match the needs and abilities of different groups of pupils more closely. Effective support from the local authority is continuing and staff training is helping teachers to become more creative in their teaching. Teachers are using information and communication technology (ICT) more effectively in their teaching. However, the school is aware of the need to extend pupils' ICT skills across different subjects. A calendar of enrichment activities for the year is now in place. It makes for a more coordinated approach to extra-curricular activities and a growth in their number and variety.

The physical environment of the school, both inside and out, is being improved to present more cared for and caring surroundings in which pupils can take pride. Pupils say that staff are approachable and are quick to help them with any problems. Pupils also say that, as behaviour is improving, instances of bullying are decreasing rapidly; they are dealt with effectively by the adults working with them.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Now that uncertainties about the leadership of the school have been settled, the school is setting about improving outcomes for pupils purposefully. It is moving effectively towards working independently with a decreasing reliance on external support. New leaders have been quick to evaluate accurately what the school does well and what its weaknesses are. The raising achievement plan and the school development plan provide the school with a sharp focus on improvement and a clear

vision for its future success. They have been drawn up in full consultation with staff and governors to encourage a wide sense of understanding and ownership. Success criteria are clearly laid out against demanding but realistic timescales. Similarly, new policies are being developed, such as a whole-school calculation policy, in consultation with all staff to make expectations crystal clear. Staff morale is continuing to rise. The school is making more effective use of data to check on pupils' progress and to set realistic and demanding targets. This is allowing the progress and achievement of individuals and groups of pupils to be checked more accurately with the aim of reducing discrepancies in outcomes. Targets are now routinely shared with pupils, parents and carers. The management structure of the school has been transformed to give post holders more manageable workloads and clearer sets of responsibilities. Job descriptions make expectations and responsibilities clear. The reform has been welcomed by middle managers who now feel able to concentrate their efforts effectively on raising achievement in their particular areas of responsibility.

The quality and amount of information provided to governors continues to improve. As a result, governors show a clearer understanding of the progress the school is making and have the necessary information to ask pertinent questions to hold the school more rigorously to account.

Progress since the last inspection on the areas for improvement:

- improve the quality of self evaluation – **good**
- improve the equality of opportunity for all pupils – **satisfactory.**

External support

The local authority continues to conduct regular school reviews, the most recent being in October 2010. These are informing the school's self-evaluation and providing effective pointers for future improvement. Support for literacy from local authority consultants is continuing. Support for numeracy is also being provided. The local authority is supporting the school in establishing and carrying out robust moderations of pupils' work to help the school gain an accurate picture of the progress its pupils are making and how well they should be doing.