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3 December 2010

Ms Carol McLachlan
Headteacher
St Peter's CofE Primary School
Whitefield Road
Bury
Lancashire
BL9 9PW

Dear Ms McLachlan

Special measures: monitoring inspection of St Peter's CofE Primary School

Following my visit with Jennifer Platt, Additional Inspector, and Adrian Guy HMI to your school on 1 and 2 December 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 first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in May 2010. 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 – 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, the Director of Children's Services for Bury and the Diocese.

Yours sincerely

Pat Kime
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in May 2010

- Raise attainment and accelerate pupils' progress, in English, mathematics and science by:
 - improving the quality of teaching so that it is at least good
 - ensuring that pupils' key skills are developed consistently and systematically through a wide range of curriculum subjects
 - using assessment information to carefully plan and implement the precise next steps in pupils' learning.

- Increase the effectiveness of leadership and management, including governance by:
 - ensuring that the monitoring of teaching and learning is rigorous and impacts on improving outcomes for pupils
 - making better use of information on pupils' progress to set challenging targets and expectations for individuals or groups
 - ensuring that all teachers are held accountable for the progress made by pupils in their class.

- Ensure that safeguarding systems and procedures are robust and regularly maintained and updated.

- Improve the outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage by:
 - monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of recent changes in provision
 - ensuring consistently good teaching and learning across the Nursery and Reception classes
 - monitoring children's progress closely so that underachievement is addressed promptly.

- Raise pupils' attendance so that it is at least in line with the national average.

Special measures: monitoring of St Peter's CofE Primary School

Report from the first monitoring inspection on 1 and 2 December 2010

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with staff, pupils, the Chair of the Governing Body and a representative from the local authority.

Context

A new headteacher and deputy headteacher took up their posts in September. Two teachers have left the school since the inspection in May 2010. At the time of this monitoring inspection, two classes were taught by temporary teachers on contract for one school year.

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

Pupils' results in the national tests and assessments at the end of the last school year show that, at the end of Key Stage 2, attainment was below average in mathematics and in English where it was lower than the previous year. Few pupils exceeded the expected level for their age. Nevertheless, last year's leavers had made satisfactory progress in Key Stage 2. At the end of Key Stage 1, attainment was below average, most markedly so in writing.

Teachers' assessments of pupils' attainment this term are inconsistent and not all are complete. Taken overall, they show a mixed picture of progress and it appears that some pupils have regressed. However, the accuracy of these assessments is not assured.

In the majority of the lessons observed, pupils made satisfactory progress but they were often working below the standard expected for their age. This picture is confirmed by the work in pupils' exercise books. In several classes, the legacy of previous underachievement means that, for many pupils, there is a lot of ground to catch up if they are to reach their targets for the end of Key Stage 2. Pupils are well behaved in lessons. They want to do well and they try hard at the work they are set.

For last year's Reception class, attainment was lower than the national average average, particularly so in their personal, social and emotional development and their communication, language and literacy. These children did not make sufficient progress in nursery and reception. Changes have been made for the better this term and a much closer watch is kept on how well the children are doing. However, it is too soon to see significant impact on children's progress.

The school has taken appropriate action to improve the quality of teaching and the tracking of pupils' progress. Thus, good foundations have been laid to improve pupils' progress. In order to accelerate progress, teachers need to develop the skill and confidence to use the new approaches routinely and effectively.

Progress since the last section 5 inspection on the areas for improvement

- Raise attainment and accelerate pupils' progress, in English, mathematics and science – satisfactory
- Improve the outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage – satisfactory

Other relevant pupil outcomes

The attendance rate improved last school year and the number of persistent absentees reduced. However, attendance is not as high as the national average or the average for similar schools.

Progress since the last section 5 inspection on the areas for improvement

- Raise pupils' attendance so that it is at least in line with the national average – satisfactory

The effectiveness of provision

Improving teaching has been tackled, rightly, as the highest immediate priority and much has been done since September. Staff appreciate this and say the training and advice they have received has helped them. A teacher, funded by the government's City Challenge in Greater Manchester, is working with staff and knows which elements of teaching still need improvement. Teachers have observed lessons in outstanding schools. The headteacher and staff from the local authority have observed the teachers at work and provided them with helpful feedback. Whole-school procedures have been introduced for planning lessons, marking pupils' work and half-termly assessment of pupils' attainment. All these measures have the potential to step up the quality of teaching but their impact is varied and new procedures are not yet followed consistently by all teachers.

The senior leadership team and the local authority have seen an improvement in teaching since the start of term. During this monitoring inspection the majority of teaching seen was satisfactory. However, teaching was inadequate in a small number of lessons. The main shortcomings seen in satisfactory and inadequate teaching were:

- work pitched at the wrong level for the pupils
- expectations that were not set high enough in view of what pupils had already achieved
- little tailoring of work to match the range of pupils' attainment within the class
- limited knowledge of up to date teaching methods.

Strengths evident in many of the lessons seen included:

- good management of pupils so they were well behaved and applied themselves to their work
- effective deployment of support staff so they contributed to pupils' learning
- clear and achievable learning objectives against which pupils could see their progress.

Typically, staff maintain good order and have good relationships with pupils. The most effective lessons challenged pupils and moved along at a brisk pace.

The school has recently begun the introduction of a computer-based system for keeping track of teachers' assessments of pupils' progress. This is to replace the various paper-based systems currently in use. It has the potential to provide a wealth of useful information for senior staff and class teachers. However, at present, not all teachers know precisely enough what their pupils can do and what should be the next steps in their learning. This is the fundamental reason why they sometimes do not pitch work suitably and adjust it to pupils' varied needs. Furthermore, it means assessments are not reliable and this, in turn, undermines the effectiveness of the tracking system in picking up underachievement promptly.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The school's leadership and management have been strengthened by the appointment of the experienced new headteacher and the deputy headteacher, who understand what needs to be done and have high expectations of what can be achieved. With support from the local authority and the City Challenge, they have introduced changes to set the school on the road to recovery. Under their leadership, monitoring of teaching has become more rigorous and the process of holding teachers responsible for their pupils' progress towards challenging targets has begun. Planning to tackle the school's weaknesses systematically is of a sound quality. Among other staff with responsibility for leading and managing aspects of the school's work, for instance the various subjects of the curriculum, leadership capacity varies and is not always sufficient.

The governing body has been temporarily strengthened by the addition of three members with relevant expertise. However, more established members of the governing body have not been effective in the past, neither fulfilling the responsibilities of governance nor understanding what needs to be done to improve the school.

The school has dealt fully with the matters regarding safeguarding pupils that were concerns in May 2010. Its arrangements are much improved. Appropriate checks are carried out and the school fulfils statutory requirements in this regard. Pupils say

they feel safe because of the new procedures, for example, to control entry to the school building.

Progress since the last section 5 inspection on the areas for improvement

- Increase the effectiveness of leadership and management, including governance – satisfactory
- Ensure that safeguarding systems and procedures are robust and regularly maintained and updated – good

External support

Following the previous inspection, the local authority produced a statement of the action it would take to support improvement in the school. This is fit for purpose and fulfilled requirements. The local authority and the City Challenge have provided valued advice, additional funding and expert support for staff. All of these have supported the school's improvement, particularly raising the quality of teaching. Taken overall, the external support for the school is satisfactory.

Priorities for further improvement

- Improve the quality of teaching by tackling, first, that which sometimes slips to inadequate.
- Strengthen the systems for assessing pupils' attainment and keeping track of their progress and the use of these systems by:
 - ensuring that teachers' assessments of pupils' attainment against the levels of the National Curriculum are consistently accurate
 - using the tracking of pupils' progress rigorously to identify underachievement and taking action to remedy it
 - ensuring that the work set for pupils always builds on what they have already learned.
- Strengthen the governing body's knowledge and understanding of the responsibilities of governance and of what has to be done to improve the school.