

## PROTECT-INSPECTION



Suite 22 West Lincs  
Investment Centre  
Maple View  
Skelmersdale  
WN8 9TG

T 0300 123 1231  
Text Phone: 0161 6188524 **Direct T** 01695 566855  
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk **Direct F** 01695 729320  
[www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk) **Direct email:** gailhill@cftb.com

6 October 2010

Mrs Nicholson  
Acting Headteacher  
Halfway Junior School  
Halfway  
Sheffield  
South Yorkshire  
S20 4TA

Dear Mrs Nicholson

### **Special measures: monitoring inspection of Halfway Junior School**

Following my visit with Naila Zaffar, Additional Inspector, to your school on 4 and 5 October 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 March 2010. The full list of the areas for improvement which were identified during that inspection are 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 and the Director of Children's Services for Sheffield.

Yours sincerely

Katrina Gueli  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## Annex

### **The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in March 2010**

- Focus all leaders on accelerating progress, by:
  - setting ambitious targets and making sure that all staff have high expectations of all pupils
  - using the outcomes of accurate self-evaluation to highlight priorities and produce focused plans which are regularly monitored and evaluated.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning, by:
  - enabling teachers to recognise National Curriculum levels in core subjects and use these levels to help plan challenging lessons
  - ensuring that all teachers use assessment data about pupils when planning lessons to match pupils' learning needs.
- Increase the rate of pupils' progress so that attainment is raised, particularly in the core subjects by ensuring that teachers:
  - monitor pupils' progress more closely in lessons and take quick and effective action where there is underachievement
  - provide pupils with clear feedback so they know exactly what to do to improve.

## **Special measures: monitoring of Halfway Junior School**

### **Report from the first monitoring inspection on 4 and 5 October 2010**

#### **Evidence**

Inspectors observed the school's work including eight lessons, scrutinised documents and pupils' work and met with the acting headteacher and other leaders, teachers and support staff, groups of pupils, the Chair of the Governing Body and representatives from the local authority.

#### **Context**

The headteacher at the time of the last inspection, retired at Easter and one teacher has left the school. Three further teachers are currently absent due to illness. A local authority lead headteacher, who was initially deployed to support the school, was appointed to the post of acting headteacher at Easter. A local authority advisory teacher was seconded to the role of assistant headteacher in May. The local authority statement of action confirms that the acting headteacher and assistant headteacher secondments will remain in place until July 2011 in the first instance.

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

Pupils' attainment rose in both English and mathematics in the 2010 national tests at the end of Key Stage 2. There was also a significant increase in the proportion of pupils making the expected progress in mathematics. This improvement in attainment reflects the significant work done to accelerate pupils' progress in Year 6 prior to the tests in May. Consequently, these unvalidated results indicate that, overall for this cohort, pupils' progress was broadly satisfactory relative to their starting points. Analysis of the school's own data for current pupils, particularly in Years 5 and 6 identifies that many are not yet on track to reach their personal targets, especially in English.

Progress in lessons seen during the inspection was variable and never better than satisfactory. This is due in part to the variation in the effectiveness of teaching but also because many pupils have yet to develop the confidence to work independently, to develop their understanding, or to practise skills.

Progress since the last inspection on the area for improvement:

- Increase the rate of pupils' progress so that attainment is raised, particularly in the core subjects – **satisfactory**

## The effectiveness of provision

Extensive whole-school and individual professional development for teachers is effectively supporting the improvement of teaching quality and the development of teachers' confidence to assess pupils' current level of working accurately. Opportunities for Year 3 teachers to work alongside feeder-school colleagues in Year 2 are helping to support transition and raise teachers' expectations of pupils' attainment on entry. A consistent approach to planning has been introduced and teachers are beginning to make use of assessment information to inform their planning to better meet the needs of different groups of learners. Teachers are sharing success criteria at the beginning of lessons so pupils have a clearer understanding of the intended learning. Teachers are also incorporating a wider variety of teaching and learning strategies into lessons. In addition, support staff are playing a more significant role in enhancing learning by providing in-class support for targeted groups of pupils and individuals in English and mathematics. Pupils told inspectors that were enjoying their lessons more, for example, the opportunity to discuss their ideas with a partner. However, despite these improvements, there is still a wide variation in the effectiveness with which teachers are utilising new approaches. In a minority of lessons seen, the activities planned did not support the intended learning well. Similarly, more refinement is needed to ensure that activities are carefully matched to the abilities of different groups of pupils and that the pace of learning is maintained.

Teachers' use of assessment to monitor pupils' progress more closely in lessons is developing. There are more frequent opportunities for pupils to reflect on their progress and understanding but teachers do not consistently make good use of this information to identify next steps or where further consolidation of the learning is necessary. For some pupils, marking provides helpful written feedback on how to improve, for others marking focuses on effort and comments do not always relate to the intended learning.

Progress since the last inspection on the area for improvement:

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning – **satisfactory**

## The effectiveness of leadership and management

Leaders seconded to the school from the local authority are making a significant contribution to improving the quality of teaching and supporting the development of other leaders within the school. Monitoring and evaluation by all leaders are more robust and there is a more systematic approach to using the findings of evaluation to inform action, particularly the next steps in staff development. Pupils' targets are increasingly challenging and teachers have a clearer understanding of the progress that is expected of pupils. Some pupils' targets are extremely challenging, reflecting the significant historic underachievement that still has to be addressed. Half-termly meetings to discuss pupils' progress have been introduced and these are providing a

sharper focus on accelerating progress and raising attainment. Partnerships are being used more effectively to enable staff to observe good classroom practice and develop their leadership skills. New appointments to the governing body are providing useful additional expertise and helping to strengthen links with the feeder infant school. A governor Ofsted action group has been established to ensure a sharper focus on the monitoring of the school's progress. The governing body has developed a clearer understanding of the school's current position through accurate and timely reporting by the acting headteacher in conjunction with effective support from the local authority. Staff absences are being effectively managed to minimise disruption to pupils' learning.

Progress since the last inspection on the area for improvement:

- Focus all leaders on accelerating progress – **satisfactory**

### **External support**

The local authority has provided good support for the school since it was made subject to special measures in March 2010. A notable feature of this support was the deployment and subsequent secondment of a lead headteacher. This swift and effective action has helped the school in making satisfactory progress in relation to all areas for improvement. A local authority review of teaching and learning shortly after the March 2010 inspection provided a clear picture of the whole-school and teachers' individual professional development needs. Early support for individual teachers from a team of advisory teachers has helped to 'kick-start' teaching improvements. The subsequent additional secondment of an advisory teacher is continuing to make a notable difference to the pace with which weaknesses are being tackled. Work with the governing body has ensured that they recognise the urgency with which the school needs to improve and are better placed to monitor the school's progress. The school is positive about the support that has been received from the local authority, including that of the human resources team in managing staff absences. The local authority statement of action was judged to require amendment and this has been addressed. However, some refinement is still required to ensure that milestones in the school action plan and local authority plan are aligned.