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02 July 2010

Mrs Julie Miles
Interim Executive Headteacher
St Patrick's RC Primary School
Livesey Street
Collyhurst
Manchester
M4 5HF

Dear Mrs Miles

Special measures: monitoring inspection of St Patrick's RC Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 30 June and 1 July 2010, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the second monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures in October 2009. 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**.

This letter and monitoring inspection report will be posted on the Ofsted website.

Newly qualified teachers **may not be appointed**.

I am copying this letter and the monitoring inspection report to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Interim Executive Board, the Director of Children's Services, Manchester and the Diocese of Salford.

Yours sincerely

Amraz Ali
Her Majesty's Inspector



Special measures: monitoring of St Patrick's RC Primary School

Report from the second monitoring inspection on 30 June and 1 July 2010

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, visited lessons, scrutinised pupils' work books and the school's documents and met with the interim executive headteacher, teaching and support staff, pupils, the Chair of the Interim Executive Board (IEB) and representatives of the local authority.

Context

Since the last visit there have been some changes to the school's context. The IEB continues to carry responsibility for governance of the school. The substantive headteacher was absent at the time of the inspection. The school is currently led and managed by an interim executive headteacher with ongoing support from a local authority officer; this arrangement will continue until the end of the current academic year. The IEB in partnership with the local authority is in the process of securing a potential temporary headteacher for two terms with the possibility of extending the arrangement for a longer period if needed. The deputy headteacher is on a phased return to her post following absence due to ill health and one teacher has returned to her post following some absence. An acting assistant headteacher has been working at the school for four weeks and has responsibility for leading the development of the Early Years Foundation Stage Unit, initially until December 2010. At the end of the summer term one long-serving member of the teaching staff will retire, one teacher leaves her post and two teachers will come to the end of their temporary contracts. Two new teachers have been recruited.

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

Although there are small signs of improvement in attainment and progress, the picture across the school remains variable and inconsistent. At the time of the previous visit attainment was low and this continues to be the case. Early indications are that the attainment of the current Year 6 group will be lower than that in 2009 and particularly so in writing. At Year 2 the most recent assessments indicate that attainment in reading and writing will be below last year's but in mathematics the proportion of pupils reaching Level 2 or above has increased. The school's systems to evaluate the progress of these and other pupils over time have not been secure and some past assessments were inaccurate. That said, there is some evidence that the progress of the current Year 6 group has varied and for some it has been satisfactory and particularly strong in recent weeks.

Teachers are developing their skills at assessing pieces of work and this is helping to provide a better picture of where pupils are and the progress that they are making. The scrutiny of work and the school's tracking and assessment information show that attainment and progress across the school remain variable. The school's



systems and procedures for tracking the attainment and progress of pupils continue to develop. Processes to identify pupils who are underachieving are in place but, as yet, the impact on their attainment and progress has been inconsistent. The impact of the school's work to improve the attainment of pupils who speak English as an additional language is also inconsistent. The arrangements for tracking progress and planning the provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities has rightly been identified as an area for further improvement.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- Raise attainment and improve achievement across the school by ensuring that any underperformance is quickly identified and challenged throughout the school, especially that of higher-ability pupils and of pupils who speak English as an additional language – **inadequate**.

Other relevant outcomes for pupils

Pupils state that they believe that behaviour around school has improved and that the new fences make them feel safer. Lesson observations confirm that behaviour is largely good and pupils have a positive attitude to their work and learning. However, there remain times when pupils do not concentrate fully, particularly where teachers talk for too long. The attendance rate, although improving, remains well below average and there are regularly many pupils who are late to their lessons.

The effectiveness of provision

The overall quality of teaching has improved and no inadequate lessons were seen, which is a better picture than at the last visit. Some of the observed teaching was judged to be securely good; some, however, was barely satisfactory. Although improving, not enough lessons are effective in ensuring that all pupils make good progress. Good relationships between staff and pupils along with clear expectations of pupils' behaviour ensure that classrooms are calm and orderly. Learning intentions are routinely shared with pupils. While they are helping pupils to know the purpose of their work, the learning intentions are not always focused sharply on what teachers want pupils to be able to do, to know or to understand. Of particular note is the improved approach to the teaching of writing. Following recent training, staff now plan opportunities for pupils to read texts, talk about texts and use drama to develop their understanding of the characters and their feelings before they go on to write their own pieces. A notable example of this was observed where Year 6 pupils very enthusiastically recited 'The Charge of the Light Brigade' to well-planned actions.

A shortcoming is that although the agreed planning format does encourage teachers to think about how the learning intentions and tasks will be modified for at least three ability levels, lessons still do not challenge and extend all pupils. On occasion, teachers' expectations of the most able pupils are not high enough. The effectiveness of teaching relies too much on the use of teaching assistants and on



the small class sizes. Particularly effective lessons get off to a prompt start and have a brisk pace. However, this is not always the case and the start of lessons sometimes slip and in some lessons the pace of learning slows when pupils spend too long listening to teachers. Additionally, time is not always best used because the expectations of how much work should be completed in a given time is not always made explicit; consequently, some pupils are slow to complete tasks or produce little in the available time. The support provided for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who speak English as an additional language remains variable.

Marking remains weak overall and on occasion absent. The use of ongoing assessment and marking of pupils' work remain underdeveloped in providing a basis for teachers to plan the next steps in pupils' learning or to inform pupils of how to improve their work.

In the Early Years Foundation Stage Unit the quality of provision continues to be variable but improvements are evident. The daily routines have been reviewed, the use of outdoor space is developing and inside and outside areas are cleaner. That said, there remains much to do to ensure that the provision is used to its fullest potential and the school has correctly identified this as an area for ongoing development.

Progress since the last visit on the area for improvement:

- Improve the quality of teaching so that most lessons are good or better by developing the use of assessment so that planning, questioning and work set are more closely matched to pupils' different levels of skills and ability – **satisfactory**.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The IEB, the interim executive headteacher and the local authority officer have an accurate view of the school's effectiveness. They know where improvements are most needed and are beginning to demonstrate some improved capacity. The IEB is challenging the performance of staff at the highest levels and is beginning to offer strategic direction to the school.

The interim executive headteacher, working in partnership with the local authority officer, has brought about some notable improvements in a relatively short space of time. There is a growing sense of teamwork among the staff and a shared desire to improve the school for its pupils and the parish. Self-evaluation is becoming accurate and the recent evaluation of teaching is robust. As a consequence, some teachers have been provided with individual support plans that are leading to improvements in the quality of teaching. Staff development is becoming effective for both teachers and support staff. Clearer systems have been introduced to encourage pupils to arrive for lessons on time.

The safeguarding issues that were identified at the time of the inspection have been fully addressed. The single central record of recruitment and vetting checks is fully up to date. Staff have received the required training on child protection and arrangements are in place to train any absent staff on their return to work. The top floor of the school is no longer in use. A new fence and electronic entry system have been installed along with closed circuit television. Improvements to the Early Years Foundation Stage unit's outdoor space mean that this area is now safe and a daily review of the learning areas identifies any safety concerns. The school is committed to enhancing the building further by relocating some dustbins from one of the pupils' entrances.

Improvements are evident since the last visit and progress has been satisfactory. However, the slow initial response to the inspection in October 2009 means that there remains much work to be done if the school is to make the planned progress and emerge successfully from special measures within the expected timescale. The current leaders and managers are realistic about the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead, particularly with the changes of staff from September. They have, for example, correctly identified the need to ensure that all new colleagues are quickly brought up to speed with the school's systems for planning lessons, marking, assessments and the need to follow agreed policies.

The leader of the Early Years Foundation Stage is clear about the unit's current effectiveness and has begun to improve aspects of practice. For example, there is now a 'key worker' system in place, routines have been improved and resources are being reviewed. She has a clear idea of where most improvement is needed and has plans in place. These plans now need to cover a longer period of time so that the increased pace of change continues over the whole of the next academic year. The role of leaders at other levels remains an area for development.

Progress since the last inspection:

- Strengthen leadership and management by: making sure that all requirements for safeguarding are met; improving the rigour of the school's procedures for target setting, analysis and tracking; increasing the involvement of leaders at all levels in monitoring the quality of teaching and its impact on pupils' learning – **satisfactory**.

External support

Support for the school has been satisfactory. The local authority continues to support the work and development of the IEB. The local authority has provided substantial amounts of its staff's time, including the work of a school effectiveness officer who has been based at the school. The local authority has been instrumental in securing the secondment of an experienced early years practitioner who has joined the school as an assistant headteacher. Support continues from advanced skills teachers to aid the development of individual teachers.

Priorities for further improvement

- Further improve teaching so that more is good or better by:
 - using assessment information to plan work for pupils that is challenging for all ability levels
 - raising expectations of the most able pupils
 - improving the pace of learning by clarifying how much work should be completed in a given amount of time
 - ensuring that marking is effective at guiding pupils in improving their work.
- Continue to develop the system for accurately assessing and keeping track of pupils' attainment and progress, particularly for the different groups of pupils at the school.
- Maintain the drive for improvement by continuing to strengthen leadership capacity at all levels.