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20 January 2011

Mr D Harvey
Headteacher
St Saviours Catholic Primary School
Seacombe Drive
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Ellesmere Port
Cheshire
CH66 2BD

Dear Mr Harvey,

Special measures: monitoring inspection of St Saviours Catholic Primary School

Following my visit with Mr Peter Jones, Additional Inspector, to your school on 18 – 19 January 2011, 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 July 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 – inadequate

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 Cheshire West and Chester and the Diocese of Shrewsbury.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Angela Westington
Her Majesty's Inspector

January 2011

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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

Annex

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

- Raise pupils' attainment and achievement in English, particularly writing, and mathematics in Key Stages 1 and 2, by ensuring that:
 - the quality of teaching, including teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve, is at least consistently good throughout the school
 - staff make accurate assessments of pupils' attainment and progress throughout the year and use this information to support transition between classes
 - teachers use assessment information to ensure that tasks match the learning needs of all pupils in lessons
 - marking provides clear guidance to pupils so that they can improve their work
 - agreed policies are implemented and adhered to by all staff.
- Improve the quality and use of self-evaluation by ensuring that:
 - leaders and managers, including the governing body, use all the data available to them to set challenging targets for pupils
 - the senior leadership team monitors and evaluates the quality of teaching with sufficient rigour to secure improvement
 - staff evaluate the impact of their actions on the outcomes for pupils
 - the views of all stakeholders are taken into account routinely in setting the priorities for school improvement
 - the governing body holds the school to account for the outcomes for all groups of pupils
- Improve partnerships with parents and carers by ensuring that:
 - parents and carers receive sufficient information about their children's progress to be able to support them in their learning
 - the school's priorities are communicated clearly to all stakeholders.

Special measures: monitoring of St Saviours Catholic Primary School

Report from the first monitoring inspection on 18 January 2011 to 19 January 2011

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the associate headteachers, the deputy headteacher, staff, the parent champion, the parish priest and a representative from the local authority.

Context

The headteacher has been on sickness leave since November 2010, at which point the deputy headteacher took over the running of the school supported by an experienced headteacher from another school for nine days until the Christmas break. In January 2011, two experienced, successful headteachers from elsewhere in the authority were appointed as associate headteachers to lead and manage the school on a shared basis, two days a week each, with the substantive deputy headteacher leading the school on the fifth day. This arrangement has the support of the diocese. One full-time, permanent teacher is currently on long-term sickness leave and two permanent teachers have left the school; one retired and another took up a new appointment. At the time of this inspection, there were 12 permanent and two temporary teaching staff, plus the associate headteachers working in the school.

Following the inspection in July 2010, a parents' champion was elected. As a result of the drop in the number of pupils on roll, the number of classes in Key Stage 2 was reduced from eight to six over the summer break and increased to seven during the Christmas period; allowing the previously three mixed Year 5 / 6 classes to be reorganised into two Year 5 and two Year 6 classes.

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

Pupils' achievement remains inadequate overall. Despite attaining broadly average standards in English and mathematics in the 2010 national tests for eleven year olds, too many pupils are not achieving as well as they could do. This is largely because the quality of teaching does not meet their needs. Teachers are hampered by the lack of whole-school systems for ensuring smooth progression and for monitoring progress in the core subjects across the key stages. For example, the school does not have a whole-school system of teaching reading, nor a whole-school record keeping system to track pupils' progress in reading. As a result, no one person is able to monitor pupils' progress in this core skill. Pupils at all levels and all ages suffer as a result. The more-able pupils are not stretched because teachers do not have a clear idea of what this group is capable of achieving and the needs of the less able are not well enough identified to enable teachers to fill the gaps in their knowledge and

skill. Currently, pupils of all ages do not have access to the full range of reading that is their entitlement and are missing out on the pleasure of reading widely.

Across the school, standards in writing are weaker than in reading. Although many pupils leave the Reception classes knowing the initial letter sound combinations and are able to write simple words and sentences, this is not built upon sufficiently well and their progress stalls. Teachers in Year 1 have been misadvised about the level and range of work that their pupils can undertake and the standards that they can attain. In Key Stage 2, the volume of written work that pupils undertake varies from class to class. A number of pupils in each class make spelling errors that should have been eradicated earlier in the school. Pupils in Key Stage 2, by and large, use a cursive script to write but it is ill formed and their work is poorly presented. There is no whole-school policy for agreeing how pupils will lay out and present their work. A consistent feature of all but one of the mathematics lessons observed was the lack of challenge for the more-able pupils who are capable of working at a higher level and doing much more. In contrast, in a good Year 3 history lesson, the pupils displayed their detailed knowledge and understanding of the events surrounding the Bouddican revolt and exhibited high levels of interest and engagement in what they were learning. They were able to cross reference their knowledge of the use of slaves in the biblical context to predict what the position might be in the Romano-British context. It is clear that the pupils are articulate, capable and eager to learn but this particular cohort attained below-average results overall in the summer 2010 assessments for seven-year-olds.

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

- Raise pupils' attainment and achievement in English, particularly writing, and mathematics in Key Stages 1 and 2 – inadequate

Other relevant pupil outcomes

As was recorded at the inspection in July 2010, pupils at St Saviour's are well behaved, polite and engaging. Even in the dullest of lessons, they behave well because they are respectful towards the adults.

The effectiveness of provision

- Inspectors observed 14 part lessons and observed the teaching of letters and sounds in the Foundation Stage classes and across Key Stage 1. Five lessons were inadequate, five satisfactory and four good. Four of the unsatisfactory lessons were in English. The main features holding back the teaching of English are: lack of whole-school agreement on how core elements will be taught
- lack of whole-school assessment systems
- lack of whole-school leadership and management of the subject
- lack of resources
- poor advice

The major fault with the quality of teaching is the weak differentiation. Too often, the teaching simply offers a range of activities rather than work that is matched to pupils' needs and which moves them on in their learning. At the heart of this is a lack of knowledge about how to assess the level of pupils' current stage of development and how to move them forward and confusion on the part of teachers about what they are trying to achieve. For example, all the guided reading sessions that inspectors observed were inadequate because the majority of pupils in the lessons were not reading but were instead engaged in other activities such as drawing pictures or completing multiplication squares. Another common weakness observed was teachers spending too long talking and pupils spending too little time working. The balance of time in too many lessons is wrong. Pupils are sitting, listening or working in pairs and groups on low-level activities when they could be working independently, for longer periods of time, on intellectually challenging work. In too many lessons, pupils offered the view that the work was 'easy, peasy'.

The assistant headteacher with responsibility for assessment has produced a tracking file for each class that brings together the end-of-year assessments for each child from Reception to Year 6. However, there are no underpinning whole-school assessment procedures for monitoring pupils' progress on a more regular basis. For example, in Key Stage 2, individual teachers undertake their own reading tests with their class but this information is not centralised and there is no agreed whole-school policy on how the information will be used. As a result, no adult in the school has a clear picture of what the reading standards are across the school, which pupils need further help or which are potential high flyers. In addition, this lack of a whole-school picture means that no-one is able to analyse results to be able to talk about the reading curriculum in its entirety; the developments that the school needs to drive forward or how to improve standards overall. This picture exists across all the core subjects.

The school is woefully lacking in resources that are now standard in most primary schools. There are simply too few books for the number of pupils in the school. It does not have a reading scheme that progresses through the school and the scheme books that the school does have are far too few in number. Similarly, teachers are not able to hear groups of pupils read because the school does not have multiple copies of books. The school library is inadequate and there is no information and communication technology suite, thus pupils are not able to undertake independent research. The classrooms are equipped with interactive whiteboards but teachers do not have the range of software, for example, to support the reading scheme, that is seen commonly elsewhere. In Key Stage 1, teachers do not have the range of resources to support the reading scheme that could be used to engage young children.

All teachers spoken to, talked with feeling about their desire to move the school forward and to bring about positive change.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Little progress was made on the issues identified at the inspection in July 2010 during the autumn term. As a result of this and the headteacher's long-term absence, the local authority has appointed two experienced and successful headteachers, from elsewhere in the authority, to work with the school four days a week. Since their appointment, staff report a gear change in the efforts to tackle the priorities facing the school and a relief that something is, finally, happening. However, this emphasis on waiting for support and help from outside simply underlines the lack of capacity currently within the school and the urgent need for all concerned to work together to develop the potential that there is within the school's teaching force. Although the school has a substantive deputy headteacher and two substantive assistant headteachers and other staff with managerial responsibility, six months have elapsed with little progress made on the issues identified in the inspection report of July 2010.

Parents who responded to the recent questionnaire welcome the support of the associate headteachers and comment on the changes apparent in the short time that they have been with the school.

In order to address the issue of communication with parents, several initiatives were planned. Mostly, they have not taken place. However, a parent governor was elected but he has not been encouraged or supported to take up his role. The associate headteachers met with him during this inspection and agreed a programme of action with him. Open events for parents took place during the autumn term and these were well attended.

The third area for improvement identified in the July inspection was self-evaluation. Little progress has been made on this front, mainly because the systems needed to evaluate the work and achievements of the school are not in place. The Chair of Governors recently met with the associate headteachers to review the school's action plan and revise the school's targets upwards. In the autumn term, the governing body received training on the use of data. A programme of lesson observations has begun but it is embryonic. Subject leaders have not routinely been involved in the monitoring of lessons in their subject. The post-inspection action plan is in its third iteration: the associate headteachers have reduced it to a more manageable size.

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

- Improve the quality and use of self-evaluation – inadequate
- Improve partnerships with parents and carers – inadequate

External support

The quality and impact of the external support provided for the school by the local authority is now good. A senior officer from the authority is monitoring the school and providing robust challenge to all concerned. He initiated the support of the associate headteachers. The local authority statement of action was evaluated by Her Majesty's Inspectors in the Schools Causing Concern Team who judged it to be satisfactory. The associate headteachers are providing good support and challenge and have the backing of the staff.