

CfBT Inspection Services      T 0300 1231231  
Suite 22      [enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
West Lancs Investment Centre [www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)  
Maple View  
Skelmersdale  
WN8 9TG

**Direct T** 01695 566934  
**Direct F** 01695 729320  
[gtunncliffe@cfbt.com](mailto:gtunncliffe@cfbt.com)  
[www.cfbt-inspections.com](http://www.cfbt-inspections.com)



14 March 2011

Mr T Barnes  
Headteacher  
Alkington Primary School  
Manor Road  
Alkington  
Middleton  
Manchester  
Lancashire  
M24 1JZ

Dear Mr Barnes,

### **Special measures: monitoring inspection of Alkington Primary School**

Following my visit with Mrs Jennifer Lawrence, additional inspector, to your school on 16 and 17 March 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 on 14 October 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 - good

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 Rochdale.

Yours sincerely

Mr Brian Padgett  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

January 2011



## **Annex**

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

- Accelerate the progress of pupils at Key Stage 1 and 2 by:
  - maintaining the focus on improving teaching and learning and eliminating inadequate practice
  - increasing the proportion of good and better lessons
  - using assessment information more consistently to match work more closely to pupils' differing needs, particularly for the more able
  - broadening the range of teaching styles to stimulate pupils' greater involvement in learning
  - improving the consistency of pupils' planning
  - providing more exciting and stimulating activities across the curriculum.
  
- Strengthen leadership and management by:
  - establishing an agreed vision for improving the school
  - increasing the pace of change
  - developing the role of middle managers in gathering secure evidence on the quality of teaching and learning and pupils' performance
  - holding staff to account more effectively for the progress pupils are making.

## **Special measures: monitoring of Alkrington Primary School**

### **Report from the first monitoring inspection from 16 March 2011 to 17 March 2011**

#### **Evidence**

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, senior staff, middle leaders, teachers, teaching assistants, pupils, the Chair of the Interim Executive Board (IEB) and representatives from the local authority.

#### **Context**

There have been many changes of staff since the inspection of October 2010. Four teachers have left and three have joined the school. A new business manager joined the senior staff and a new assistant headteacher has been appointed. The assistant headteacher is due to take up her post at the beginning of the summer term. The deputy headteacher has been on sick leave since January.

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

Children continue to get off to a good start in the Early Years Foundation Stage. The school's tracking records suggest that Year 6 pupils are in line to make broadly average attainment by the end of Key Stage 2, which would represent satisfactory overall progress. The records also suggest that writing and mathematics remain priorities for improvement throughout the school. Gaps in pupils' knowledge and understanding caused by previous underachievement are most noticeable in Years 4 to 6.

The impressions of pupils' progress in the lessons observed were more positive than that provided by the analysis above. Pupils are generally making better progress than they were and they are enjoying school more than they did. Partly, they attribute improvement to better behaviour but also because they are listened to more than they were, feel they can influence things, and because they have a clearer idea of what is expected of them.

The school's records suggest that although there are occasional variations in the performance of different groups of pupils, for example, those from minority ethnic backgrounds or those eligible for free school meals, there is no overall pattern. The school admits pupils with a very wide range of learning difficulties, some of a severe and complex nature and some of a social, emotional and behavioural nature. While inspectors found no cause for concern the checking of whether the school was meeting all their varied needs successfully was not a focus of this inspection.

## **Other relevant pupil outcomes**

Inspectors agree with pupils that behaviour is improving, continuing the improvement noted in the report of October 2010. Most behaviour is good and some better than that when pupils become engrossed in their work. Exclusions of pupils, once at very high levels for a primary school, have fallen dramatically.

The improving ethos of the school, the promotion of enjoyment, and of involving parents and carers and the community were well illustrated in an uplifting assembly by a Year 2 class. The children gave of their very best, entertaining and engaging their parents and carers and other pupils very successfully. Their success was fully celebrated and got the morning off to a very positive start.

## **The effectiveness of provision**

The quality of teaching and learning is improving. Two-thirds of the lessons seen were of good quality. In February 2011, a local authority review also recorded much improved teaching since the autumn term.

The determination of teachers to promote pupils' learning well was always clear in lessons. They were explicit about the aim of each lesson. They explained to pupils what successful learning should look like, although sometimes this was more a list of things to do. Teachers have put a lot of effort in making lessons more active for pupils, ensuring they have the opportunity to talk together, work together and share ideas. This is working well. Pupils say lessons are more interesting. For example, in the week before the visit, the school held a business enterprise week. Parents and carers commented on how much their children enjoyed this. Year 6 pupils took this work further as part of their literacy lessons, working on television journalism and filming their interviews. This activity generated huge excitement with a cleverly linked focus on writing scripts and cue cards. It also successfully promoted pupils' personal development by challenging their ability to organise themselves within a tight deadline.

Lesson planning is now rigorous and a common approach to incorporating the elements of good planning is emerging. However, despite growing confidence, teachers appear reluctant to deviate from their plans, even when they discover that the activities do not fully meet the learning needs of the pupils. This sometimes includes the higher attaining pupils who occasionally find their work a shade too easy. Teaching assistants play an increasingly visible role in teaching and learning, to the extent that it is more appropriate to talk of teaching teams in the school, where teams are led by class teachers.

Teachers maintain comprehensive records of progress in the core aspects of reading and writing and for mathematics. This marks a distinct improvement in practice. Teachers increasingly use the records to identify pupils who are not making the progress they had hoped for and then arrange extra opportunities for these pupils to catch up. These records also contain challenging targets, so teachers have a clear idea of the expectations for pupils'

attainment by the end of the year. The marking examined in workbooks was consistent. It showed teachers relating learning to the aims for the lesson and then suggesting areas for further improvement. Pupils reassured inspectors they always read these comments and acted on them.

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

- Accelerate the progress of pupils at Key Stage 1 and 2 - good

### **The effectiveness of leadership and management**

It is in the area of leadership and management that the school has made most progress. The inspection report of October 2010 commented that staff morale was 'very low' and that the school lacked an 'agreed vision for improvement'. This situation is no longer recognisable. There has been a significant improvement in the morale of staff. Despite natural nervousness over the inspection among staff, inspectors noted a sense of growing confidence at all levels: a momentum for change. The headteacher is developing a collegiate approach to leadership and this is working very well, empowering staff, particularly middle leaders and encouraging the ownership of changes. Staff feel better led by the senior leaders. Pupils and their parents and carers believe the school is improving. The positive nature of the assembly, for example, provided evidence to support the parents' and carers' views that the school is now turning around, recovering from a period when they agreed there was 'something not right'.

The developing role of middle leaders is an important barometer for the school's continuing improvement. As yet, middle leaders are at an early stage of developing their plans. However, there is an enthusiasm for developing the curriculum and improving teaching not recorded in the previous inspection and this is an encouraging sign. All staff have been involved in developing the vision for the school; cross-phase working parties are now an established strategy for tackling whole-school issues.

The senior leaders have made significant progress in ensuring accountability, driven to a large extent by the need to meet the exacting standards laid down by the new interim executive board. A rigorous system of data analysis to provide an overview of the work of the school is emerging. Accountability is further enhanced by a series of interviews held between the headteacher and each teacher to review the progress of pupils following termly assessments. These meetings help senior leaders to gauge the progress of the school towards its targets but also enable teachers to share concerns with the management and negotiate further support.

To date, the school has relied heavily on support from the local authority. In the light of the good progress being made, it is appropriate for a change in emphasis in order to further build the school's capacity to sustain improvement and stand on its own feet.

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

- Strengthen leadership and management - good

### **External support**

The local authority has provided and brokered effective support to the school since the October 2010 inspection. Support for teachers has proved very successful. Teachers have appreciated the opportunity to work alongside advanced skills teachers in their classrooms and have valued the contribution of the teaching and learning consultant deployed to the school. At senior leader level the headteacher has developed a good and productive relationship with his School Improvement Officer and with a Local Leader in Education, funded through the Greater Manchester Challenge.

The governing body, supported by the local authority, decided to make way for an IEB. The board has come into action, with highly experienced members from a range of education and related backgrounds. It is playing an important role in supporting and holding the leadership to account.

### **Priorities for further improvement**

- Ensure teachers exercise their professional judgement more, to adapt their teaching, when necessary, to best meet the learning needs of pupils.
- Review the success with which the school is meeting the needs of the broad range of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, taking appropriate action where required.
- Adjust the emphasis of external support to reflect the progress made by leaders and managers and to build further the capacity for sustained improvement.