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05 Apr 2011

Ms C McLachlan
Headteacher
St Peter's Church of England Primary School
Whitefield Road
Bury
Lancashire
BL9 9PW

Dear Ms McLachlan,

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

Following my visit to your school on 5 Apr 2011 and 6 Apr 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 second 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 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

Progress since previous monitoring inspection - satisfactory

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 Bury.

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 Church of England Primary School

Report from the second monitoring inspection from 5 Apr 2011 to 6 Apr 2011

Evidence

The inspector observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher and deputy headteacher, middle leaders and other teachers, pupils, two members of the governing body, a representative of the local authority and the acting special educational needs coordinator.

Context

There have been several changes since the previous monitoring inspection. Two teachers, one of them the special educational needs coordinator, have been on sick leave since January and their classes are currently taught by temporary teachers. The role of special educational needs coordinator is being covered, on a voluntary basis, by a teacher who is due to join the school's staff next term, as a class teacher. A new Chair of the Governing Body was appointed, on a temporary basis, in January. Arrangements are in place for a specialist leader in education to support the school next term as the lead teacher funded by the City Challenge for Greater Manchester is moving on. Three teachers have been appointed to join the staff in September 2011.

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

Pupils' progress is improving. In most of the lessons observed the majority of pupils made at least satisfactory progress and in some lessons progress was good. Pupils were generally well behaved and applied themselves to their work. The best learning was seen in lessons where groups of pupils undertook practical activities in order to solve problems. Pupils who met with the inspector, all from Year 6, believe they are doing much better in their learning. They put this down to interesting lessons, in which they know what is expected of them, and individual targets to check their progress against.

The school's records of pupils' attainment and their progress would indicate that the majority of pupils are making gains in their learning. Nonetheless, pockets of significant underachievement remain and, for too many pupils, progress appears to have stalled. In Years 4, 5 and 6 attainment in writing remains low.

Children's progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage has improved, though it is better in the Reception Year than in Nursery.

Progress since the last monitoring 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 school has taken a firm approach to improving attendance. The importance of school attendance is more to the fore with pupils, and parents and carers. A range of rewards for good attendance has been introduced and the headteacher and the governing body have clamped down on holidays in term time. The attendance rate has improved since January, compared with the same period last year, but it is still not as high as it should be.

Progress since the last monitoring 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

The teaching seen was better than that observed in December, with more that was of a good quality. For the most part, teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are higher and work is better matched to the range of pupils' attainment within each class. Greater consistency of methodology is evident across the school. For example, marking of pupils' work follows a consistent policy throughout the school. Pupils' exercise books showed that teachers balance recognition of learning with pointers for further improvement. The more successful lessons were well structured and well focused with clear objectives which pupils understood. They built up pupils' learning progressively through appealing activities.

Nonetheless, inadequate teaching has not been entirely eradicated and some of the satisfactory teaching is not sufficiently strong to promote effective learning over time. Teachers have had a great deal of support to improve their skills, from the lead teacher funded by the City Challenge, local authority staff, the school's senior staff and visits to observe good practice in other schools. However, in some cases this support has had limited impact on the quality of their teaching. Where teaching was less effective, it was primarily because of weak understanding of the subject or the needs of the age group. This resulted in a poor match of work to pupils' learning needs, a lack of clarity about what pupils were to learn and a slow pace that failed to engage pupils' attention and interest.

An agreed annual cycle of assessment activities has been established to keep track of pupils' progress as they move up the school. Appropriate steps have been taken to improve the accuracy of teachers' assessments of pupils' work in English and mathematics. However, some earlier data are insecure. Consequently, although a suitable system is now in place and followed by all teachers, insufficient secure data have built up to give a reliable measure of pupils' term by term progress.

This term the school has introduced a more cross-curricular approach to the teaching of subjects other than English and mathematics. The planning for this is adequate but, as yet,

opportunities for pupils to use and develop key skills across subjects are not planned robustly.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Staff appreciate that the headteacher and deputy headteacher, with support from the City Challenge and the local authority, have established consistency in the school's work; clarified what is expected of staff; and supported them in meeting higher expectations.

The wider senior leadership team has an enhanced role. Staff with responsibility for leading work in English and mathematics have benefitted from training in leadership. They feel empowered to monitor and evaluate work in these subjects and to make a meaningful contribution to the drive for school improvement. Leadership of other subjects is considerably less well developed.

Rigorous monitoring of teaching has continued and meetings with teachers to discuss their pupils' progress have become part of the regular routine so a culture of greater accountability is accepted. These activities are supplemented appropriately by individual support plans for staff and individualised packages of support.

The Chair of the Governing Body brings a wealth of relevant experience to the role and has a good understanding of what needs to be done and how improvement might be achieved. The governing body has a clear action plan to guide its work. Governors are becoming more involved in school life and in supporting the school's leaders and holding them to account.

The arrangements for safeguarding pupils have been enhanced by the extension of the perimeter fence to include the portable classroom.

Progress since the last monitoring inspection on 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 – satisfactory

External support

The local authority and the City Challenge have continued to provide the school with effective support and advice which is valued by staff.

Priorities for further improvement

- Ensure that pupils who have fallen behind or whose progress has stalled catch up as much lost ground as possible.
- Rigorously review the impact on pupils' achievement of actions taken to promote improvement and use the findings to influence planning for the future.

- Prepare carefully for the arrival of new staff to ensure that the momentum of improvement is not reduced.