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27 May 2011

Mrs J Symes and Mr D Williams
Associate Headteachers
St Saviours Catholic Primary School
Seacombe Drive
Great Sutton
Ellesmere Port
Cheshire
CH66 2BD

Dear Mrs Symes and Mr Williams,

Special measures: monitoring inspection of St Saviours Catholic Primary School

Following my visit with Mr Geoff Lawrence to your school on 25 and 26 May 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 on 06 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

Progress since previous monitoring inspection - 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, the Director of Children's Services for Cheshire West and Chester and the Diocesan Director of Education for Shrewsbury.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs Angela Westington
Her Majesty's Inspector

January 2011



Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place on 06 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 second monitoring inspection from 25 May 2011 to 26 May 2011

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the associate headteachers, a group of pupils, parents and carers at the beginning of the school day, the parent champion, the Chair and vice chair of the Governing Body, a senior representative from the local authority, the Diocesan Director of Education, the learning mentor and higher level teaching assistant and subject leaders for English, mathematics and information and communication technology (ICT).

Context

Since the previous monitoring inspection, there have been substantial changes to staffing. The substantive headteacher, an assistant headteacher, three teachers and a teaching assistant have resigned and two teachers and one teaching assistant are on long term sick leave. Three experienced teachers have been seconded into the school, temporarily, to take a Year 6, a Year 3 / 4 and a Year 2 class in the interim. Three additional teaching assistants have been appointed, one to provide one-to-one support. In addition, the roles and responsibilities of other staff have been restructured: one teaching assistant has been designated a higher level teaching assistant and another as a learning mentor. The substantive deputy headteacher now oversees special educational needs and safeguarding and three new subject leaders have been appointed to take forward the work in English, mathematics and ICT. The two associate headteachers still support the school, each on a part-time basis but plans are in place to withdraw the support of one in order to build further capacity within the school's own staff.

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

Evidence from lesson observations, from pupils' work in class, their books and from the school's recently collected data confirms that standards remain broadly average by the end of Key Stage 2 but there remains considerable underachievement for many pupils in reading, writing and mathematics across the school. Much has been done to establish systems to monitor the standards reached and the progress made by pupils; work on this development is at an early stage. Nevertheless, the early data reveals that as well as the general underachievement by most pupils, the group of pupils that is, potentially, the most vulnerable in the school, including those eligible for free school meals are particularly underachieving.

Since the previous visit, the school has worked well to address the weaknesses identified in the teaching and monitoring of reading. The data now available identifies where in school pupils are making least progress. There are gaps in pupils' reading skills across the school,

but those in Year 1 and some pupils in Year 2, have made least progress. In Key Stage 1 there is now a system for teaching all pupils letter-sounds. Pupils are placed in groups according to their acquisition of these sounds. However, not all adults taking these groups have been appropriately trained to undertake this crucial work.

Across the school, standards in writing are lower than they are in reading and in Key Stage 1, over time, pupils' progress in writing has not improved sufficiently. Pupils do not write often enough and when they do it is too often to complete worksheets requiring one word or short sentence answers. Pupils' work is replete with habituated errors that are not corrected, for example:

- repeated misspellings of high frequency words and words on display in the classroom
- little use is made of pupils' knowledge of letter sounds
- upper and lowercase letters are mixed together in words
- incorrect letter formation, reversals of letters, weak handwriting and lack of attention to layout and presentation.

In Key Stage 1, the teaching of writing does not focus on the child's writing development but on the delivery of a set programme. For example, more-able pupils are not stretched or required to write at length frequently enough, and, in contrast, lower attaining pupils are often asked to complete tasks that are simply beyond them or irrelevant to their need at that time. Expectations of what pupils of this age can achieve are too low. As a result of the weaknesses in Key Stage 1, teachers in Key Stage 2 are 'playing catch up' with their pupils.

In contrast, in Key Stage 2, on this visit, pupils were seen to be making better progress than previously, especially in mathematics and reading. The tremendous effort made to overhaul the reading provision since the last monitoring inspection is paying dividends, especially in Key Stage 2. Parents, carers and pupils spoken to were enthusiastic about the changes and reading now has a significantly higher profile in the school. Writing in Key Stage 2, overall, is weaker than reading; the legacy of previous underachievement and teaching not being focussed on the improvements needed. Expectations of the range and quality of writing that pupils in Key Stage 2 are capable of producing remain too low. Inspectors observed several mathematics lessons on this visit, in Key Stage 2, mainly focussed on shape and measures, during all of which pupils' learning was good. However, inspectors noted gaps in pupils' wider mathematical knowledge.

Other relevant pupil outcomes

Pupils remain well behaved but, on this occasion, there were one or two examples of pupils being challenged by the higher expectations placed upon them. The school's new behaviour programme is having a positive effect: several pupils and parents and carers spoke to inspectors about it. The associate headteachers have, rightly, recognised that some potentially vulnerable pupils are not receiving the support they need and have now introduced a pastoral programme, led by the newly designated learning mentor, to provide help for them. Pupils in receipt of this support spoke very warmly about the care provided.

The focus, by the learning mentor, on attendance and punctuality is having a positive impact.

Progress since the last monitoring inspection on the areas for improvement:

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

The effectiveness of provision

Inspectors observed 16 lessons, of which the teaching and learning in nine were good, in five satisfactory and in two, inadequate. All bar one of the good lessons was in Key Stage 2; all the teaching observed in classes taken by temporary teachers was good. Teaching by the substantive teachers in Key Stage 2 was more secure than on previous occasions. In contrast, although some satisfactory teaching and one good lesson, was observed, on this occasion, in Key Stage 1, it does not build on the solid foundations laid in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Over time, the teaching in Key Stage 1 is not securing pupils' progress.

Assessment in Key Stages 1 and 2 remains a weakness, although the recently established tracking system has allowed teachers to organise pupils more clearly into groups and to begin to match work better to their needs. A programme of small group and one-to-one support has been established for almost a fifth of pupils. Agreed policies are not consistently implemented by all staff. For example, while the new 'meet and greet' and reading policies are being introduced, the Key Stage 1 handwriting policy is not. One or two staff do not accept the need for urgency and change and do not take responsibility for the progress of all pupils in their class.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

A major improvement since the last inspection is that, to the inspectors, St Saviour's now feels like one school. The split site and the separation of Key Stage 1 from Key Stage 2 does not make the establishment of a unified school community easy, but the implementation of whole-school policies, such as the reading policy, have provided a cohesion that, previously, was not present. Both buildings now have similar types of display, storage and classroom layouts, such as the reading areas in every classroom and on corridors.

The associate headteachers continue to lead the school very well and by strong example. They have been unstintingly generous with their time and commitment to the school. They have undertaken a considerable amount of work to establish and embed new systems which are, in a short period of time, beginning to bear fruit. They have worked tirelessly to ensure that the school's improvement agenda moves forward. Much relies upon them still and parents and carers and pupils recognise the beneficial changes they have brought about.

The associate headteachers, the governing body, the Diocese and the local authority recognise, however, that the critical issue is to build capacity within the school's own

substantive staff, especially as the school considers the appointment of a new substantive headteacher. To this end, the substantive deputy headteacher is now developing her role as special educational needs and safeguarding manager and three new subject leaders have been appointed. In the short space of time since their appointments, the new managers have written action plans following scrutiny of pupils' work, pupil interviews, staff surveys and audits of staff skills. Training on lesson observations and the analysis and use of data is planned. The middle managers are enthusiastic and keen to drive improvement. They lead newly established subject teams, so that all teaching staff are involved in developments. The improvements in the reading provision in the school and in the reading outcomes for pupils indicate that, although embryonic, capacity is beginning to improve.

There have been improvements in governance. A local experienced headteacher has joined the governing body to strengthen its ability to hold school managers to account and to evaluate the work of the school. A programme of governor training has been put in place which includes training on the analysis of school data. The governing body is now asking more pertinent questions, but the data they need, for example, on the progress made by groups, especially vulnerable groups, or trends in performance, is not yet available to them. Not all staff are familiar with the attainment and progress data that is used to inform a school's self-evaluation and, therefore, still do not understand some of the reasons for the school's current situation.

There has been a great deal of work undertaken to improve partnerships with parents and carers and all parents spoken to were overwhelmingly appreciative of the many changes in this area. New initiatives include: meetings to discuss the new behaviour policy; the introduction of a year long Family Learning Programme; parental participation in celebration assemblies; 'Hotline' newsletters from the headteachers; regular parental surveys which are acted upon and workshops developed as a result, and a new 'meet and greet' policy for the start and end of the school day.

Progress since the last monitoring inspection on areas for improvement:

- improve the quality and use of self-evaluation - satisfactory progress
- improve partnerships with parents and carers - good progress

External support

There continues to be good support from the local authority. The school is overseen by a senior officer who provides robust, clear challenge and practical brokering of additional resources and staff.