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28 November 2011

Mr Joe Lawless  
Acting Headteacher  
Stockton Heath Primary School  
West Avenue  
Stockton Heath  
Warrington  
Cheshire  
WA4 6HX

Dear Mr Lawless

### **Special measures: monitoring inspection of Stockton Heath Primary School**

Following my visit with Doreen Davenport, Additional Inspector, to your school on 24 and 25 November 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 June 2011. 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 Strategic Director of Children's Services for Warrington.

Yours sincerely,

Margot D'Arcy  
Additional inspector

September 2011



## **Annex**

### **The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in June 2011**

- Accelerate progress and raise attainment in writing and mathematics in Key Stage 2 by:
  - using information about the progress of different groups effectively to set challenging targets for improvement
  - making staff accountable for the progress pupils make
  - ensuring that all staff provide work that builds on pupils' prior learning in order to improve their achievement.
  
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning by:
  - raising teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve
  - ensuring that teachers use assessment information consistently to set work that effectively challenges different groups, especially the more-able
  - improving feedback and marking so that pupils are clear about the next steps in their learning.
  
- Improve the quality of leadership and management by:
  - delegating leadership and management responsibilities among staff and ensuring that all leaders are fully involved in promoting school improvement
  - ensuring self-evaluation is accurate and provides a firm basis for long-term planning for improvement
  - rigorously monitoring teaching and learning to provide a clear picture of their quality throughout the school.
  
- Improve the behaviour of pupils in the designated unit by:
  - developing and embedding robust procedures for managing behaviour so that pupils and staff are safe at all times and learning can proceed without distractions.
  
- Improve provision and pupils' progress in the designated unit by:
  - improving the expertise of staff in meeting the specific needs of individual pupils
  - ensuring that on-going assessments of individual pupils' progress are rigorous so that specific next steps in learning can be set.

## **Special measures: monitoring inspection of Stockton Heath Primary School**

### **Report from the first monitoring inspection on 24 and 25 November 2011**

#### **Evidence**

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the acting headteacher, deputy headteacher, groups of pupils, the Chair of the Governing Body and a representative from the local authority.

#### **Context**

An acting headteacher has been seconded from a local primary school to work at the school four days a week for two terms; he took up his appointment at the start of the autumn term. Two teachers, one of whom is a member of the senior leadership team, have resigned. Two other members of the school's senior leadership team are absent, one in the longer term. The substantive headteacher continues to be absent.

The local authority has closed the designated provision for pupils with autistic spectrum disorder. One pupil who attended this provision is now being taught in a mainstream class within the school; all other pupils from the provision have been found alternative schooling. Consequently, the two final areas for improvement in the annex to this letter, which relate specifically to the designated provision, are now not applicable and will not be reported on.

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

Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage continue to achieve well and thoroughly enjoy the wide range of stimulating learning experiences provided for them. The majority of pupils in Key Stage 1 are making appropriate progress and many are making better progress in learning the basic skills of reading, writing and mathematics. Although the most recent (2011) national assessments of seven-year-olds showed a dip in writing standards, attainment in this area remained significantly above the national average. During the inspection, pupils in Years 1 and 2 produced some very good-quality writing about their understanding of why people wear poppies. The national assessments also showed that attainment in reading and mathematics was significantly above the national average, continuing the trend of improvement begun in 2009.

In the 2011 national tests for 11-year olds, attainment in English and mathematics was broadly in line with the national average. This has been the general picture of attainment at the end of Key Stage 2 for a number of years. Although this group of pupils made good overall progress from a lower-than-average starting point at the end of Key Stage 1, underachievement at Key Stage 2 is still evident. Across this key stage the progress made by pupils remains too variable. While some pupils are learning effectively and making up lost ground in response to good teaching, too many are not building well enough on their earlier

learning because weaknesses in teaching remain. Overall, given children's attainment on entry to the school and at the end of Key Stage 1, standards of attainment by the end of Year 6 are not high enough and pupils are still not achieving as well as they should.

The school is using assessment information about the progress of different groups of pupils to set challenging targets and direct intervention in writing and mathematics. Work has also begun on implementing processes that will make teachers accountable for the progress of pupils in their classes. Although there are some early indications of improvement for some pupils, such as those with special educational needs, there is no notable evidence of the accelerated progress required, particularly for the more-able pupils at Key Stage 2.

Progress since the last section 5 inspection on the area for improvement:

- Accelerate progress and raise attainment in writing and mathematics in Key Stage 2 – inadequate

### **Other relevant pupil outcomes**

Although at the time of the last inspection pupils' behaviour was judged to be inadequate, this related specifically to the behaviour of pupils in the designated provision. During this monitoring inspection, the good behaviour noted in the main school during the last inspection was evident in an assembly attended by pupils in Years 1 to 6 and in most lessons. However, when the work provided for pupils did not match their needs or repeated earlier work, many did not engage fully in lessons, for example, by listening attentively, showing keenness to answer questions or applying themselves well to tasks. Low-level misbehaviour was also evident from a minority of pupils in these situations. Pupils report that behaviour in lessons and other contexts is generally good. They have expressed some concerns about lunchtime behaviour and how this is dealt with by some supervisory staff. The school's review of its behaviour policy has included seeking pupils' views and focusing a weekly assembly on behaviour, with class follow-up.

### **The effectiveness of provision**

The quality of teaching remains inconsistent throughout the school. Teaching ranges from outstanding to inadequate. There are strengths in teaching in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1. There is some good teaching at Key Stage 2, but over half of the teaching observed by inspectors at this key stage was inadequate, despite improvements to planning.

Where teaching is inadequate, teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are still not high enough and too often the work pupils are given does not take account of what they already know. In a number of mathematics lessons, more-able pupils spent time completing worksheets of calculations that they were able to perform mentally or completed tasks that they had been set within a fraction of the time that had been allocated. Other weaknesses in teaching included slow pace and repetition of work in which pupils' learning was already secure. In contrast, in one English lesson, the teacher's strong subject knowledge, high

expectations and excellent inclusion of all pupils through differentiated questioning, fired their enthusiasm to write character descriptions using complex sentences. In other successful lessons in mathematics, teachers provided very good challenge for all groups of pupils, frequently reviewing the learning of all throughout the lessons and adjusting the challenge or support as required, to optimise learning. During the inspection, pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities were being supported effectively by the staff assigned specifically to them.

The school has reinstated its motivational marking policy and a recent analysis of marking shows that pupils are receiving better feedback about how they can improve their work.

Progress since the last section 5 inspection on the area for improvement:

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning – inadequate

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

The acting headteacher and deputy headteacher are working effectively together and beginning to gain an increasingly accurate view of the quality of provision and what must be done to raise achievement. The school recognises that a strong, active and effective senior leadership team is crucial to the improvement process, as is the delegation of subject responsibilities among staff. However, despite the acting headteacher's and deputy headteacher's best efforts, improvements in this area have been slow. Improvements have been hindered by the absence of senior leaders and the staff's resistance to taking on responsibilities for leading and managing subjects. Although this is something which is undertaken by staff in most schools, historically delegation of this nature has not been in place at Stockton Heath other than for English and mathematics. Very recently, the majority of staff have indicated a willingness to coordinate subjects. Currently, however, this remains a significant weakness in the school's leadership and management structure and is limiting the school's capacity to improve. The acting headteacher, deputy headteacher and governors recognise the need for the senior leadership team to be restructured and plans are in place for the school to work with the local authority's human resources department on this in early January 2012.

The acting headteacher and deputy headteacher have monitored the quality of teaching of most teachers by agreed formal observations and unannounced general visits to classrooms. One senior leader has also been involved in observing lessons. This work is beginning to provide the school with a general view of strengths and weaknesses in teaching. The school is now aware of the need to refine its monitoring programme to include a greater focus on what pupils of different abilities are learning in lessons and to increase the emphasis on identifying strengths and weaknesses in teaching and learning from scrutiny of pupils' work.

The governing body is committed to the school and keen to see it improve. To this end it has put in place a specific committee to monitor and evaluate progress in relation to the areas for improvement identified at the time of the last inspection. The governors who met with the lead inspector showed an astute understanding of the school's weaknesses and the

steps that are needed to secure improvement. However, governors have not received the training planned to support them in monitoring, evaluating and reviewing the work of the school, as identified in the local authority's statement of action for building the school's leadership capacity.

Progress since the last section 5 inspection on the area for improvement:

- Improve the quality of leadership and management – inadequate

### **External support**

The quality and impact of external support are satisfactory. The school has received regular visits from its local authority advisor. These have supported the implementation of performance management for teachers and a review of pupil performance data. There has been half a day's in-service training for staff on what constitutes successful teaching and learning. On the advice of the local authority, the school has brokered support from an independent company. The local authority intends to monitor and evaluate this to ensure that it is tailored to the school's specific needs. To date, the support from this company has included working with the subject leaders of English and mathematics and with teachers from specific year groups on planning differentiated learning. While the local authority's statement of action is fit for purpose, it is not explicit in stating whether support will include formal observations of teaching or analysis of pupils' work. In view of the school's reduced senior management team, input of this nature would provide valuable validation and moderation of the judgements of the acting headteacher and deputy headteacher and of other senior leaders for whom this type of work is planned.