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20 January 2012

Mrs Sharon Bruton  
Executive Headteacher  
Hindley Green St John's Junior and Infant School  
Atherton Road  
Hindley Green  
Wigan  
Lancashire  
WN2 4SD

Dear Mrs Bruton

**Special measures: monitoring inspection of Hindley Green St John's Junior and Infant School**

Following my visit with Sheila Mawer, Additional Inspector, to your school on 18 and 19 January 2012, 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 – 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 Corporate Director People for Wigan and the Diocese of Liverpool.

Yours sincerely

Jane Austin  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

January 2012



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

## **Annex**

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

- Secure and improve the longer term leadership, governance and staffing of the school.
- Improve all pupils' achievement and raise their attainment across the full range of subjects by:
  - increasing the proportion of pupils gaining the higher levels in reading, writing and mathematics in all year groups
  - raising the quality of all teaching and assessment to good or better
  - improving the teaching of early reading and writing, including the teaching of letter sounds, so that all children make better progress
  - ensuring that pupils study a full range of subjects.
- Ensure that the Reception class is taught by a qualified teacher.
- Ensure that during the transition to federated school status, pupils remain well supported and parents and carers are kept fully informed of developments.

## **Special measures: monitoring of Hindley Green St John's Junior and Infant School**

### **Report from the first monitoring inspection on 18 and 19 January 2012**

#### **Evidence**

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the executive headteacher, the associate headteacher, staff, the Chair of the Governing Body, groups of a pupils and representatives from the local authority.

#### **Context**

Since the section 5 inspection, the school has become part of a federation of three local primary schools, one of which is a national support school. This is headed by an executive headteacher who is a National Leader in Education, with an associate headteacher in place to oversee the day-to-day running of the school. Some staff, such as the business manager and the inclusion manager, have roles across the federation's schools and contribute to the provision at Hindley Green St John's. The Interim Executive Board has been dissolved and a single governing body formed, with responsibility for all three federation schools. Three teachers new to the school took up post in September 2011. All pupils are now taught in mixed-age classes.

#### **Achievement of pupils at the school**

At the end of the previous academic year attainment was average overall. At Key Stage 1, pupils' performance was a little above the national averages in reading and mathematics but slightly below this benchmark in writing, since fewer pupils reached levels above those expected for their age. The results of the 2011 national tests for Year 6 pupils were broadly average in both English and mathematics. However, an above average proportion of pupils exceeded the level expected for their age in mathematics, whereas in English the proportion reaching this higher Level 5 was below average. Overall, and in English, pupils' progress in Key Stage 2 was significantly above that found nationally. It was broadly average in mathematics. Progress was a little weaker for pupils with disabilities and those with special educational needs.

A system of regular assessments to track pupils' progress has been introduced. Initial indications from this are that pupils are making increased gains in their learning. Challenging targets have been set for the pace of pupils' learning and regular review meetings are held with teachers to identify strategies to help pupils meet these. Helpfully, the school is able to work collaboratively with its federation partners to moderate assessments, which is developing teachers' skills and increasing confidence in the accuracy of judgements about the core subjects. Assessments are being used effectively to identify pupils who would benefit from interventions in English and mathematics. These have been put in place but it

is too soon to evaluate their impact on pupils' learning. Assessment of pupils' attainment and progress in the foundation subjects is at an early stage of development.

Senior leaders have gained a clear view of the extent and nature of pupils' disabilities and special educational needs. The local authority's services have been quick to respond to the need for expert diagnoses of learning difficulties and this has enabled the school to put appropriate individual support in place for a number of pupils. Additionally, the federation's inclusion manager has worked with staff to draw up individual education plans as well as provision maps for those with less extensive needs.

Pupils are keen learners who apply themselves well to the tasks in hand. They work well with one another both informally and in more-structured situations, for instance as talk partners. They take pride in their work, as is evident from the good standard of presentation in workbooks. The recent focus on a consistent approach to joined handwriting is paying dividends. Pupils are gaining resilience as learners. This is fostered by the development of a whole school culture where all are encouraged to 'have a go' and where making a mistake is the precursor to learning.

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

- improve all pupils' achievement and raise their attainment across the full range of subjects – satisfactory.

### **The quality of teaching**

There has been a keen focus on making improvements to teaching through a consistent whole-school approach, supported by training and coaching. Some benefits of this were evident during this inspection, for instance, in lesson planning and the framing of learning challenges. In the better lessons, pupils are clear about what they are learning and what is expected of them as they tackle tasks. These are matched well to the next steps pupils need to take in their learning. There is a good balance between input from teachers and time for pupils to complete activities. Effective use is made of interactive white boards, for instance, to demonstrate mathematical strategies. Pupils are given opportunities to assess one another's work as well as show their own levels of confidence about new learning. Pupils spoke enthusiastically about imaginative stimuli for learning, such as the case of the disappearing cake. Year 6 pupils were highly motivated in writing instructions for blogging and operating a mobile phone for 'an old lady' who dropped into their class during the inspection.

Where teaching is less successful, too much time is spent on exposition so pupils have too little time to engage with learning activities. Resources are not well matched to the learning objective and only a limited range of recording methods are used, sometimes slowing pupils' work rate. During whole-class sessions, teaching assistants are not always fully engaged in supporting pupils. At times, in the cross-curricular delivery of foundation subjects there is a lack of clarity about learning objectives, leading to ill-judged tasks which do not enable

pupils to make sufficient progress. At Key Stage 1, there is a lack of challenge for higher attaining pupils.

The positive impact of training is evident in teacher-led sessions in the Reception class. The teaching of phonics is clearly focused and is improving children's knowledge of letters and sounds. Assessment procedures and practices are improving. In addition to informal assessments, which take place during group and individual activities, regular assessments are made after guided reading and writing sessions. However, links to the next steps children need to take in their learning are rarely made. At times, this results in child-initiated and adult-led tasks that lack sufficient challenge or activities which are only suitable for Year 1 children in this mixed-age class. An adequately equipped writing corner is in place to support early writing skills. Children are encouraged to sit down and form their letters correctly. Overall, however, resources for both indoor and outdoor learning are sparse.

A creative approach to the curriculum has been introduced, linking the delivery of a range of subjects to a theme. Planning for themes is at an early stage of development and does not always bring together the skills of various subjects with equal success. A manageable assessment system is being trialled. Pupils spoke enthusiastically about this approach to learning. They find the topics engaging and relish the opportunity to have some say in what they learn. They find it rewarding to discover answers to their questions as work on a theme develops. A positive dimension is the project homework, an open-ended task for individuals or groups in which families which can get involved. Displays around the school bear witness to the high quality of some of the projects.

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

- raise the quality of all teaching and assessment to good or better – satisfactory
- improve the teaching of early reading and writing, including the teaching of letter sounds, so that all children make better progress – satisfactory
- ensure that all pupils study the full range of subjects – satisfactory.

## **Behaviour and safety of pupils**

Pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. They are friendly, polite and courteous to adults and treat each other with respect. They are upbeat about school life and those spoken to were keen to explain how things have changed for the better. Across the school good relationships between adults and children, along with pupils' positive attitudes to learning, are notable features. A clear behaviour management system is in place which pupils understand. Attendance and punctuality have improved this year. Rates of attendance are well above the national average.

## **The quality of leadership in and management of the school**

The school's membership of the federation has secured the long-term leadership of the school. The executive and associate headteachers are ambitious for the school and have articulated clearly a vision for its future which encapsulates high expectations of staff and

pupils alike. In a very short period, they have been successful in establishing a positive ethos which reflects the school's voluntary aided status.

There is a rigorous approach to inadequate provision. No time has been wasted in the introduction of key systems, such as the tracking of pupils' progress, to support improvement. Robust processes have been established for the regular monitoring and evaluation of the quality of provision. Through these, senior leaders are garnering a comprehensive view of the strengths and weaknesses of teaching and learning. This is informing frequent and regular training for all teachers, as well as the coaching and mentoring of individual staff. The school is drawing effectively on good practice within the federation and beyond. Rightly, in this initial period, the focus has been on establishing leadership at the senior level. There are helpful plans, underway in the initial stages, for the development of leadership at other levels. The Reception class is taught by qualified teachers.

A number of helpful steps have been taken to ensure that the parent body is well informed about developments in the school. Meetings have been held and more are planned. Weekly newsletters are circulated. At the beginning and end of each day teachers are available for informal conversations with parents and carers. All families can now be contacted electronically. A recent survey of parental views drew positive responses. More sustained contacts are being developed through parenting courses and a fast-growing toddler group which was started last term.

Governance has been established across the federation. Although the governing body is new, many members have previous experience of their role. The Chair of the Governing Body provides a committed and challenging lead. The executive headteacher ensures that the governing body are provided with high quality information. A discrete committee has been formed to monitor the progress of Hindley Green St John's and individual members of the governing body have been linked to classes.

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

- secure and improve the longer term leadership, governance and staffing of the school - good
- ensure that the Reception class is taught by a qualified teacher – this issue has been dealt with in full
- ensure that during the transition to federated school status, pupils remain well supported and parents and carers are kept fully informed of developments – good.

### **External support**

The local authority has addressed the weaknesses in its statement of action so that this is now fit for purpose. Links between the action plans of the school and the local authority are strong. Support for the school has been good. The local authority responded rapidly when it became evident that assessment of the requirements of a number of children with disabilities and special educational needs was urgent. Additional support in this area is still

underway. There is a helpful separation between the local authority's support and monitoring of the school's actions and evaluation of its progress.