

CfBT Inspection Services
Suite 22
West Lancs Investment Centre
Maple View
Skelmersdale
WN8 9TG

T 0300 1231231
Text Phone: 0161 6188524
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk

Direct T 01695 566930
Direct F 01695 729320
Direct email:
[enquiries@cfbt-
inspections.com](mailto:enquiries@cfbt-inspections.com)



13 September 2012

Mr Dominic Mulcahy
Headteacher
St Joseph's Stockport Catholic Primary School
Etchells Street
St Petersgate
Stockport
Cheshire
SK1 1EF

Dear Mr Mulcahy

Special measures: monitoring inspection of St Joseph's Stockport Catholic Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 11 and 12 September 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 second monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in December 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

Progress since previous monitoring inspection - satisfactory

Newly Qualified Teachers should 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, Services to People for Stockport and the Diocese of Shrewsbury.

Yours sincerely

Jane Austin
Her Majesty's Inspector

January 2012



Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in December 2011

- With immediate effect, take steps to improve the effectiveness of safeguarding procedures by:
 - setting up systems and procedures, with clear lines of accountability, to ensure the safety and welfare of all pupils
 - establishing clear management responsibilities and record-keeping in relation to all aspects of safeguarding
 - establishing systems to monitor regularly the effectiveness of safeguarding.

- Raise attainment in English and mathematics by:
 - eradicating inadequate teaching and increasing the proportion that is good or better
 - ensuring that teachers have the skills and knowledge to assess pupils' learning accurately
 - ensuring that teachers' marking supports pupils to make progress in line with their starting points and helps them to improve their work
 - providing an appropriate curriculum, with opportunities to develop pupils' writing skills across a range of subjects
 - providing pupils with the opportunity to develop their skills and ensure progression in their learning.

- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
 - developing systems and procedures to assess the effectiveness of actions taken to improve the impact of teaching on pupils' learning
 - involving all stakeholders in more effective action-planning
 - empowering middle leaders to take responsibility for improving outcomes
 - improving the analysis and monitoring of achievement for all groups of pupils.

- Increase the effectiveness of the governing body by:
 - ensuring that statutory responsibilities are met for safeguarding
 - improving procedures for monitoring and evaluating the impact of the school's actions, in order to secure improvement and hold leaders fully to account for the school's performance.

- Reduce the level of pupils' absence by continuing to promote vigorously the benefits of regular attendance to pupils and their parents and carers.

Special measures: monitoring of St Joseph's Stockport Catholic Primary School

Report from the second monitoring inspection on 11 and 12 September 2012

Evidence

The inspector observed the school's work including parts of 10 lessons, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, staff, a group of pupils, the Chair of the Governing Body, a representative from the local authority and the National Leader in Education who is supporting the school.

Context

The headteacher retired at the end of the last academic year. At short notice, a new headteacher took over the leadership of the school at the beginning of term: he had been in post for six days at the time of the monitoring inspection. The deputy headteacher is on maternity leave: her post is being covered by a teacher seconded from a local outstanding school. Following some alterations to the school building, all pupils are now taught in classrooms of a suitable size.

Achievement of pupils at the school

The 2012 unvalidated Key Stage 2 national test results show an improvement on those of the previous year. There was a rise in the proportion of pupils reaching the expected level for their age in both English and mathematics, although the percentage attaining the higher Level 5 was largely unchanged. Pupils' performance improved very substantially in writing at the expected level but this was not replicated at the higher level. However, in reading the proportion of pupils reaching the higher level doubled. Nonetheless, attainment overall remains much lower than the national average, with girls outperforming boys. Overall, pupils' rate of progress during Key Stage 2 was slightly lower than the national average but showed a substantial improvement on that of the previous cohort.

The picture is also positive with regard to the Year 2 national assessments. Improvements were marked at all levels in reading and at all but the highest level in writing and mathematics. Pupils' performance is above the national average in reading and mathematics but remains below average in writing. Almost all Year 2 pupils made satisfactory or better progress in reading and mathematics but about a quarter did not make the expected progress in writing. In other year groups the school's data indicate that attainment remains lower than average with about a third of pupils working below the level expected for their age. Performance is strongest in reading.

In the Reception class about two thirds of the children developed their skills and understanding to at least the level usual for their age: a similar proportion made good progress during the year.

A range of training and support provided by the local authority and the National Support School has had a positive impact on improving the accuracy of assessments as well as teachers' facility in using the school's system to track pupils' progress. However, a whole-school approach to the use of data to accelerate pupils' learning is not in place. Consequently, the benefits of training are uneven and practice is inconsistent. There is a lack of clarity about which analyses are helpful and who is responsible for conducting these. The transfer of information about pupils' attainment and progress to new class teachers did not happen until the beginning of this term, limiting detailed preparation. Target setting for this year has not taken place.

Across the school, pupils display very positive attitudes to learning. In discussion, older pupils were enthusiastic about what they described as a more exciting approach to learning this year. During lesson observations pupils in several classes were overheard commenting on the fun they were having and the 'buzz' they were getting from challenging activities. In lessons where tasks demand active participation in learning, pupils' levels of engagement are high. They are keen to do well, work productively together and listen attentively to adults and their classmates. They try hard to articulate their thinking, for instance in a Year 3 mathematics lesson when explaining how to partition two digit numbers.

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

- raise attainment in English and mathematics – satisfactory.

The quality of teaching

There has been some improvement to teaching overall, with good elements evident in a number of lessons observed. However, the quality of provision remains variable. Where teaching is better, the positive impact of training and coaching provided by the local authority and the National Support School is evident. In these lessons teachers are using a range of techniques effectively to gauge pupils' grasp of the topic and adjust activities accordingly. Teachers' questioning is carefully targeted to develop and check pupils' understanding as well as identify misconceptions. These better lessons move at a brisk pace as teachers convey high expectations and a sense of urgency about learning.

However, improvements are not uniform and some teaching is not effective enough. In such lacklustre lessons, activities are not designed carefully to enable all pupils to make progress. Too much time is devoted to class management because pupils' interest is not captured at the outset. On occasion, teaching assistants are not deployed to best effect. The absence of both a strategic approach to improving the quality of teaching and regular monitoring and evaluation means that the benefits of the training received are uneven. Not all staff have had the training and support required to prepare them for new year groups and phases.

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

- eradicate inadequate teaching and increase the proportion that is good or better – satisfactory.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

The thorough, graduated approach to improving attendance and punctuality introduced earlier this year has continued to be implemented to good effect. Attendance improved further in the summer term, showing a substantial rise on the same period in 2011. Attendance for the whole academic year rose to just below the national average. The school's approach to supporting pupils who have high levels of absence, and their families, is individually tailored and proving effective. The number of persistent absentees has decreased. The school is alert to potential attendance issues for pupils who joined the school at the beginning of this term. Punctuality has also improved markedly. New, engaging approaches to encouraging good attendance and punctuality, such as the attendance tree, have been introduced this term. Pupils say these, along with a range of rewards, are good motivators.

Pupils are polite and behave well: they are courteous and considerate as they move around the school and talk to adults. Older pupils are excited about the forthcoming appointments of a head boy and head girl are writing their applications diligently. They are keen to reinstate the school council and ensure it makes a difference.

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

- reduce the level of pupils' absence by continuing to promote vigorously the benefits of regular attendance to pupils and their parents and carers – satisfactory.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

Considerable support for senior leaders from the local authority and the National Support School provided the school with some capacity to move forward last term. Although the speed and extent of improvement were not as originally planned, the support was pivotal in bringing about the improvements noted in pupils' achievement and the quality of teaching. The school lacked the capacity to follow through initiatives and embed these thoroughly in practice. Systems to check the impact of new ways of working and ensure consistency in their application were not implemented effectively. Consequently, although some improvements are evident, the benefits of the support were diluted and there are inconsistencies in practice in many areas of the school's work. Little progress has been made on developing a suitable curriculum. Middle leaders are uncertain of their responsibilities and have not had the direction required to enable them to make a full contribution to the school's improvement.

The local authority's recent unannounced check confirms that the safeguarding measures put in place at the beginning of this year are working effectively. However, plans for the school to take full responsibility for monitoring safeguarding arrangements have fallen behind. Pupils spoken to say that they feel safe in school and are confident that adults will help them should they have any concerns.

The well-led governing body is providing a much higher level of challenge to the school, including through the monitoring committee, than was previously the case. Senior leaders were not always able to provide governors with information in sufficient depth and breadth to evaluate the school's progress in detail last term. Nonetheless, the governing body now has a much clearer view of the school's situation. A policy for governors' visits has been agreed and is due to be implemented this term. Governors' commitment to improving their understanding of governance is evident in the high level of attendance at a recent conference, as well as through their agreement to complete training online.

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

- improve the effectiveness of leadership and management – inadequate
- increase the effectiveness of the governing body – satisfactory
- improve the effectiveness of safeguarding procedures – satisfactory
- provide an appropriate curriculum with opportunities to develop pupils' writing skills across a range of subjects – inadequate.

External support

The local authority's considerable support is a key factor in the progress the school has made. The school's improvement officer has been pivotal to maintaining momentum in the school's journey. A clear aim has been to embed improvement by getting to the root of issues. However, the school's lack of leadership capacity means that the impact of support has not been commensurate with its extent or quality. Similar issues pertain to the work of the National Leader in Education. Early plans to work strategically, as well as at a teacher-to-teacher-level, had to be scaled back. Nonetheless, a profitable start was made last term on the development of a policy and good practice in feedback to pupils and review of their learning. Lesson observations indicate that this is bearing some fruit. The local authority worked swiftly and effectively with the diocese and the Chair of the Governing Body to secure the leadership of the school for this academic year.