

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 566862
Direct F 01695 729320
Direct email:
rcowley@cfbt.com



28 September 2012

Mrs D Faley
Acting Headteacher
St Thomas More Catholic Primary School
Creswick Lane
Grenoside
Sheffield
South Yorkshire
S35 8NN

Dear Mrs Faley

Special measures: monitoring inspection of St Thomas More Catholic Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 25 and 26 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 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 Director, Children and Young People's Directorate, Sheffield.

Yours sincerely,

John Young

Her Majesty's Inspector



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

Annex

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

- Raise pupils' attainment and accelerate the pace of progress throughout the school in mathematics and English by making sure that teaching is consistently good and incorporates:
 - activities which match closely the abilities of all groups of pupils and which offer sufficient challenge, especially for those pupils capable of working at higher levels
 - marking which consistently informs pupils of their progress and how to move further forward in their learning
 - continuity of pupils' learning and progression, through careful planning of the curriculum.

- Increase the effectiveness of leaders and managers at all levels by ensuring that:
 - the school's priorities are a major focus on a daily basis and that there is a regular review of progress towards them , leading to appropriate actions
 - they have the necessary training and support to carry out their roles effectively
 - the governing body translates its comprehensive knowledge of the school into effective monitoring and evaluation of the school's priorities so that it holds leaders to account for the school's performance.



Special measures: monitoring of St Thomas More Catholic Primary School

Report from the second monitoring inspection on 25 and 26 September 2012

Evidence

The inspector evaluated teaching and learning in each of the seven classes in the school. He held discussions with the acting headteacher and other school leaders, groups of pupils, a local authority representative, members of the governors' strategy group, a Catholic Diocesan representative and the headteacher of the partner school. The inspector also scrutinised school documents and reports.

Context

Since the first monitoring inspection the school has appointed a Year 3 teacher with management responsibility for Key Stage 2, a Year 2 teacher to co-ordinate the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1, and a Year 4 teacher to cover the year-long maternity leave of a member of staff. The school has also employed a supply teacher to cover the absence of a teacher in the Early Years Foundation Stage. The Year 6 class teacher absent at the first monitoring inspection has since left the school. The vacant positions on the governing body, which included the Chair and vice-chair have been filled.

Achievement of pupils at the school

Lesson observations and school data reveal that overall, increasing numbers of pupils are making faster progress and their attainment is rising. The results of the 2012 national reading, writing and mathematics tests for Year 2 and Year 6 pupils attest to this and confirm that particularly in Year 6 there were sizeable improvements in the proportions of pupils reaching and exceeding the expected levels of attainment when compared with the 2011 outcomes. This was the case for all groups of pupils. Notwithstanding this significant improvement, the school understands that the next obstacle it must negotiate is to close the attainment gaps that still exist for too many pupils within and across year groups, who continue to languish below age-related expectations, particularly in writing. The Early Years Foundation Stage outcomes in 2012 were lower than in each of the previous two years and the school accepts that these results are a setback. More rigorous target setting and assessment, and focused intervention by staff, are supporting the gains evident and producing more reliable data.

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

- Raise pupils' attainment and accelerate the pace of progress throughout the school in mathematics and English - good



The quality of teaching

The lead inspector and the acting headteacher conducted eight joint lesson observations and then revisited every class in the school for a shorter period. These indicated that while the overall impact of teaching on learning continues to improve, the disparity between the most and least effective practice observed was considerable. The high-quality teaching observed really captured pupils' imaginations and inspired them to make rapid gains in their knowledge, skills and understanding in some literacy and numeracy lessons. The satisfactory lessons observed were often too generally focused and were not sufficiently tailored to pupils' individual needs and lacked suitable challenge. The weakest lessons left pupils confused and unclear about learning objectives and/or unequipped to deal successfully with the challenges set. Nevertheless, there was some evidence that staff are adhering more closely to whole-school protocols for planning lessons and encouraging pupils to share their ideas and develop their thinking with each other. It was noticeable that the quality of learning was more pronounced in literacy and numeracy lessons than in some of the other subjects sampled. Training, mentoring and coaching are commonplace but there is still some way to go before teaching is consistently good throughout the school day in and day out. Overall, teaching assistants continue to make a meaningful contribution to pupils' learning. The quality of marking and feedback continues to improve and is more consistent than at the time of the first monitoring inspection.

While the strong focus on promoting pupils' literacy and numeracy skills remains, the school has added some additional breadth and balance to the core curriculum offer with further enrichment planned. A series of after-school clubs is being run and the school incorporated major events such as the Queen's Diamond Jubilee and the Olympic Games into their programmes of study. The number of visits and visitors remains limited. In summary, efforts to enhance the curriculum remain a work in progress.

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

- Making sure that teaching is consistently good - satisfactory

Behaviour and safety of pupils

During the inspection the large majority of pupils' behaviour at social times and during lessons did not give the inspector cause for concern. Generally, pupils relate well to each other and to staff. They are mostly attentive, considerate and respond readily to their teachers' instructions. They are safety conscious and know about the potential dangers of fire, the Internet and strangers. Occasionally, less positive behaviour was apparent. This was usually linked to less effective teaching. Staff direct pupils' behaviour suitably, but some pupils require very careful supervision and cannot yet cope with the responsibility of managing their own behaviour. An evaluation of incident, accident and behaviour logs continues to show that although the volume of incidents is not high, there are some physical attacks and some repeat offenders.



Ultimately, the improvement evident at the time of the first monitoring inspection was not sustained and pupils' overall rates of attendance have been stubbornly low over time. This is despite the concerted efforts of staff via a raft of initiatives to improve it, and to raise awareness of the damage regular absence can have on pupils' achievement.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

The effectiveness of leaders' and manager's contribution to school improvement since the school was placed into special measures, and since the first monitoring inspection, is reflected in pupils' improving achievement, the increased consistency, reliability and quality of assessment practice, marking and feedback. On-going staff training is helping to embed a number of the improvement strategies introduced, particularly in relation to all staff taking some responsibility for leading and managing teaching and learning. A number of staff have benefitted from observing good practice in the partner school and all teachers have specific targets related to pupils' achievement in their performance management agreements. The school's leaders are regularly monitoring and evaluating the impact of their improvement measures and refining their approaches as necessary. They have a realistic view of the distance still to travel before the school has tackled and resolved the areas of weakness which prompted the special measures judgement. Since the first monitoring inspection the dynamics of leadership have changed with the transition to a sole acting headteacher and the new senior leaders with responsibility for improving provision and outcomes in each phase of learning. Expectations and accountability are high, with the school determined to prove it is worthy of exiting the special measures category ahead of timescales. Time will tell how effectively this new team gel and/or make this ambition a reality.

Governors have responded positively to the messages conveyed in the first monitoring report and are operating more efficiently and effectively to complement their undoubted allegiance to the school. They have a better idea of the full requirements of their respective roles. Governors are undertaking monitoring and evaluation activities such as learning walks of the school, and have introduced more focused committees to which staff can be called and held to account. This, and the training and support they have received from the local authority and senior staff, is enabling them to evaluate more clearly the relative progress the school is making in tackling the key issues it has, and to offer greater challenge.

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

- Increase the effectiveness of leaders and managers at all levels - satisfactory

External support

The Catholic Diocese of Hallam has taken up the role traditionally associated with a local authority when supporting a school in special measures and continues to broker valuable and much appreciated support, guidance and funding to aid the school's improvement. The local authority has assumed a lesser role, although an officer is strategically advising senior leaders and governors. The support from the partner school continues to bear fruit.

