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28 September 2012

Mrs S Kerwin
Headteacher
St Andrew's Maghull CE Primary School
Deyes Lane
Maghull
Liverpool
L31 6DE

Dear Mrs Kerwin

Special measures monitoring inspection of St Andrews CE Primary School

Following my visit with Charles Lowry, Her Majesty's Inspector, and David Byrne, additional inspector, to your school on 26 and 27 September 2012, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave during the inspection and for the time you made available to discuss the actions which have been taken since the school's recent section 5 inspection.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in April 2012. 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.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time:

The school is making reasonable progress towards the removal of special measures.

Newly qualified teachers may not be appointed.

This letter and monitoring inspection report will be published on the Ofsted website. I am copying this letter and the monitoring inspection report to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Interim Executive Board (IEB) and the Director of Children and Young People's Services for Sefton.

Yours sincerely

Steve Isherwood

Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in April 2012:

- Raise pupils' attainment and accelerate their progress in English, particularly writing, and mathematics by:
 - raising teachers' expectations so that they are clear about what pupils in each year group should be achieving in reading, writing and mathematics
 - securing more rapid progress in writing by creating more opportunities for pupils to write in more depth across a greater range of subjects
 - ensuring teachers' assessment and marking provide more detailed feedback to enable pupils to understand the next steps that will move them on to higher levels of attainment
 - ensuring all teachers adapt work to enable pupils of all abilities to be sufficiently challenged, particularly the most able.

- Ensuring all teaching is consistently good or better by:
 - eliminating inadequate teaching
 - sharing the best practice within the school to ensure a greater amount and consistency of good teaching
 - improve the pace of learning and pupils' engagement in lessons, ensuring they do not spend too long listening to teachers.

- Improve teaching, planning and organisation in the Early Years Foundation Stage and ensure that adults interact effectively when children are engaged in independent activities.

- Establish robust and effective leadership, including governance, by:
 - ensuring self-evaluation is accurate
 - monitoring teaching and pupils' progress rigorously, and use this information to focus actions on improving pupils' achievement and to inform the professional development of staff.

Report on the first monitoring inspection on 26 and 27 September 2012

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with senior leaders, groups of pupils, members of the Interim Executive Board (IEB) and the School's Improvement Partner.

Context

The local authority has used its powers to establish an IEB, following concerns regarding the capacity of the governing body to secure the necessary improvements and hold the school to account. Leadership and staffing roles have been restructured with the appointment of phase leaders and an acting deputy headteacher will be appointed in October 2012.

Achievement of pupils at the school

Following the previous inspection, the school has reacted positively and taken appropriate action to lay the foundations for improvements in pupils' learning and in raising their achievement. Typically, pupils are keen to learn new skills and answer questions readily in class. They particularly enjoy activities where they can make decisions and discuss and share their ideas with each other. Although not consistent in all classes, opportunities for pupils to engage in their learning are beginning to gather pace. For example, in a Year 3 lesson, the atmosphere buzzed with excitement as pupils wrote their own accounts of the discovery of Tutankhamen's tomb by Howard Carter. With skilful prompting from the class teacher, pupils were able to deepen their understanding of the key features of effective report writing.

There are positive signs in lessons, in pupils' books and from school data that increasing numbers of pupils, including disabled pupils and those with special educational needs, are making better progress than previously. The increased focus on reading has lifted standards and there is clear evidence to suggest that pupils in most year groups are catching up and making expected levels of progress, particularly in mathematics and reading. For example, the test results for 2012 show that the proportion of Year 6 pupils achieving the expected Level 4 in English and mathematics has risen to 93%. In addition, children in the Early Years Foundation Stage have made increased gains in their knowledge, skills and understanding over the last year. Their progress now compares favourably with local and national levels.

This rising trend has come about because the school has successfully introduced several new strategies to improve pupils' achievement. There are signs that teachers' expectations are higher in some classes and pupils are rising to them because teachers are more aware of the progress that pupils should make. There are regular reviews of how well pupils are achieving and increasingly staff are held

to account for the progress their pupils are making. Improvements to tracking systems are enabling staff to identify more clearly those pupils who are underachieving. While not consistent in all year groups, teachers are gaining confidence in judging the level of pupils' work and have a better understanding of what pupils can do and what they need to learn next. As a consequence, the school is better placed to judge how well pupils are achieving and plan appropriate support.

Nevertheless, the school is aware that the progress of pupils is not yet consistent in all year groups. Too many pupils, particularly those of higher-ability, are not making the progress they should and their potential remains largely untapped. There are still areas of underachievement and in certain phases of the school, most noticeably in Key Stage 1, some pupils are behind where they should be due to poor learning in previous years. In addition, the progress pupils make in writing is not as rapid as it is in reading because opportunities for pupils to use and apply their writing skills across the curriculum are not always taken.

Overall, these weaknesses are because of variability in the quality of teaching which results in some pupils not achieving as well or as rapidly as they should.

The quality of teaching

The quality of teaching is getting stronger but remains variable. Although improvements have been made in reducing inadequate practice, some still remains and there is still some way to go to ensure that learning is good in every lesson. The proportion of good and better lessons is not strong enough yet to overcome the legacy of underachievement and to make up for the gaps in pupils' knowledge and skills. Nevertheless, senior leaders have made some headway in placing pupils' learning at the heart of planning, in making learning more active and in providing more detailed feedback to pupils on the quality of their work. For example, teachers have improved their planning and organisation and are more aware of what makes an effective lesson. This is particularly evident in the Early Years Foundation Stage where much has been accomplished to improve provision both inside and outside the classroom since the previous inspection. Overall, the sharing of good practice within the school is underway but needs to go further.

In the best lessons, pupils are encouraged to test and deepen their understanding with carefully crafted activities that promote high levels of understanding and independent thinking. For example, pupils in Year 6 made good progress in solving problems involving multi-step calculations by discussing and sharing their ideas with others. Where teaching is less strong, teachers underestimate what pupils can achieve and activities for higher-ability pupils lack pace and challenge. This is because assessment information is not always used consistently to plan work at the right level. All too often, tasks are not stretching enough and are restricted to writing a longer story or tackling a harder sum with insufficient attention given to the development of pupils' thinking skills. Not enough opportunities are provided in

lessons for pupils to direct their own learning and make decisions about how they learn because in some lessons teachers tightly control what pupils do. This reduces their ability to work independently. Furthermore, in some lessons pupils are not working at the correct level and activities are not sufficiently engaging to sustain pupils' concentration for longer periods of time.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils' positive attitudes to school, their strong self-motivation and ready acceptance of how things are have masked underperformance. When asked to express their views on the school there was strong praise for staff and the high quality support they receive. They report that their lessons are getting better and that the school is improving although some weaknesses remain. 'We get to do more things now'; 'Our work is harder now', and, 'Sometimes the work is too hard and sometimes too easy', were typical of their comments.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

The headteacher has gained an accurate view of the school's most pressing problems and the factors at work and in doing so has established productive working partnerships with the local authority, other schools and the IEB. As a group, leaders are putting the concerns of the past behind them, are keen to move forward and have devised a clear agenda for improving the school. They correctly recognise that maintaining the focus on improving teaching is a key priority and is central to accelerating pupils' progress further.

A more robust programme of monitoring the quality of provision has been established. Senior leaders have begun to check more effectively on the consistency of teaching with feedback and guidance provided to staff. This information is being used more efficiently to inform professional development. Further improvements, however, are required in how senior leaders evaluate the achievement of pupils and groups within lessons.

Members of the IEB have been supportive, given a good steer to the school's direction and have been critical in evaluating the school's progress. As a group, they have a realistic view of the school's situation and its priorities. They are actively looking for solutions to sustain the impetus for improvement and are working with the local authority to ensure that support matches the school's needs.

While taking pride in recent improvements and setting the school on the right path, all parties acknowledge that much further work is still required to tackle the legacy of underachievement and realise the potential of all pupils.

External support

The local authority recognises that it underestimated the extent of the school's deficiencies prior to the last inspection. Currently, the local authority is providing a much improved level of support to the school, coordinated by the School Improvement Partner. Amendments to the statement of action have been made and the plan now contains more details of how the local authority will support the school in the year ahead. In addition, quantifiable targets for staged improvement are now in place to support improvements to the quality of teaching. Ongoing work through support and training is proving effective in building the confidence of staff and improving provision.

Priorities for further improvement

- Eliminate inadequate teaching.
- Maintain the focus on improving teaching and learning by increasing the proportion of good and outstanding lessons.
- Use assessment information more consistently to match work more closely for higher-ability pupils and ensure greater rigour in planning to promote pupils' independent and thinking skills.
- Accelerate pupils' progress further, particularly at Key Stage 1, and in pupils' writing across the school.