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23 November 2012

Mrs Elaine Richardson
Headteacher
St Augustine's Catholic Primary School
Conwy Court
Castlefields
Runcorn
Cheshire
WA7 2JJ

Dear Mrs Richardson

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

Following my visit to your school on 21 and 22 November 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 February 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 and the main judgements are set out below.

Progress since being subject to special measures – inadequate

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – satisfactory

Newly Qualified Teachers may not be appointed. However, the teacher currently working in the school is allowed to complete her probationary period. This will be reviewed by HMI next term.

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 and Enterprise for Halton.

Yours sincerely

Jane Millward

Her Majesty's Inspector

January 2012



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

Annex

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

- Raise attainment in English and mathematics to at least national average levels by:
 - improving rapidly the progress all pupils make in their learning
 - ensuring the assessments of what pupils can do are secure, particularly so in writing
 - improving the quality of teaching so it is consistently good across the school
 - ensuring suggestions made to pupils for improving their work, in marking for example, are followed through with rigour and consistency
 - revising the register of pupils with special educational needs so that pupils are placed at the most appropriate stage to best support their learning and development.
- Improve the quality of leadership, including governance, and strengthen the school's capacity so that both are at least good by:
 - ensuring all actions identified in improvement plans are followed through systematically and with rigour and that leaders report clearly the impact of these actions on pupils' learning
 - providing training for all subject leaders and the Early Years Foundation Stage leader so they are confident in reporting the quality of achievement and teaching in their areas and that their judgements are based on secure evidence
 - ensuring records of concern about individual pupils are refined so that they provide a systematic overview of any actions taken and the resultant impact.
- Ensure that all children in the Early Years Foundation Stage benefit from the recently developed learning environment, particularly the outdoor area, so that their overall development is enhanced.

Special measures: monitoring of St Augustine's Catholic Primary School

Report from the second monitoring inspection on 21 and 22 November 2012

Evidence

The inspector observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the acting headteacher, staff, representatives from the local authority, the Chair of the Governing Body and groups of pupils.

Context

Since the last inspection the Chair of the Governing Body has resigned and a new Chair elected. The headteacher and one class teacher remain on long-term absence.

Achievement of pupils at the school

Improvements to the quality of teaching mean that pupils are enjoying learning and show good attitudes in lessons. This is beginning to have a positive effect on the progress they make in reading, writing and mathematics.

Unvalidated results of the national assessments and tests in 2012 indicate that attainment at the end of Year 2 remains low. Furthermore, it has declined from the previous year. Current data held by the school do not indicate that standards will improve. When pupils leave school at the end of Year 6 attainment remains low, although standards have improved considerably from 2011. Pupils known to be supported through the pupil premium (additional government funding) are achieving better than they were and the school is beginning to close the gap on standards for groups of pupils.

Internal data held by the school remain a concern because they do not show that pupils' attainment is catching up enough to bring it in line with national expectations. However, there are some examples of better progress where teaching is more engaging. Assessments are more accurate and the acting headteacher continually reviews how data are collected and used. The school acknowledges that refinements are needed to show pupils' progress and to monitor how groups of pupils perform.

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

- Raise attainment in English and mathematics to at least national average levels – satisfactory

The quality of teaching

Improving the quality of teaching has, quite rightly, been the focus for the school. An intensive programme of support is in place to improve teaching and all teachers have

received training. As a result, teaching has improved and teachers are more confident to deliver lessons that are better matched to pupils' needs. Teachers use questioning to improve pupils' understanding and they encourage pupils to be independent learners and find solutions to learning challenges. Teaching assistants generally give effective support, especially for the lower-ability pupils and they give them confidence to 'have a go'. A greater emphasis has been given to the teaching of basic skills in reading, writing and mathematics. This is helping pupils to plug any gaps in their learning. However, the effectiveness of this work has not been monitored.

Teachers are developing the ways in which they challenge pupils and expectations of what they can achieve are beginning to improve. Activities in lessons are becoming more practical which means pupils are more interested in their work and they show better engagement in tasks. As a result, pupils are beginning to make better progress.

Marking provides pupils with next steps in their learning. In the best examples, pupils respond back to the teacher's comments. However, this is not consistent across classes and subjects. In some cases teachers' marking does not guide pupils with how to improve and some work remains unmarked.

Learning environments have been improved. Resources have been purchased, including new books to support pupils' learning. Across the school, writing is not celebrated sufficiently with too little of pupils' work on the walls. As a result, writing is not regarded as a priority within the school.

The learning environment in the Early Years Foundation Stage is well ordered and children use this to support their learning. Activities are well thought out and encourage children's independence and extend their thinking. For example, children enjoyed asking the gingerbread man questions, such as how fast he could run! The outdoor environment is well used and children regularly learn outside.

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

- Improve the quality of teaching – satisfactory
- Ensure that all children in the Early Years Foundation Stage benefit from the learning environment – satisfactory

Behaviour and safety of pupils

Pupils continue to be polite and courteous to adults and to each other. As one pupil told the inspector, 'we always hold doors open for each other!' Pupils' behaviour in lessons is good, especially where learning is more interesting. Pupils are keen to persevere with activities and are frequently encouraged by teachers to help each other when they get stuck. The acting headteacher has developed incentives to promote good behaviour including the 'star of the week!' award.

Attendance continues to improve and a greater focus has been directed on encouraging pupils to attend school regularly. Awards are given out on a half termly basis and pupils are keen to be recognised for good attendance.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

The deputy headteacher continues to work as the acting headteacher. She has prioritised the correct areas for improvement and has provided effective support and challenge to help the school move forward. Systems and procedures are becoming more established and are beginning to improve the school. The acting headteacher holds an accurate view of the school's strengths and weaknesses and she works closely with the governing body, the local authority, the diocese and local schools to improve outcomes at St Augustine's. The action plan to improve the school has been reviewed in the light of the last inspection to provide greater strategic direction. Although successes are evaluated regularly, the systems to evaluate the school's actions need to be clarified further and involve the governing body to a greater extent.

Monitoring of teaching and learning is carried out by the acting headteacher. This enables the school to hold an accurate view of the quality of teaching. However, insufficient detail is given to pupils' attainment and progress when judging the effectiveness of lessons. A monitoring cycle is developing to make sure all staff are held to account for the outcomes for all pupils.

The newly elected Chair of the Governing Body is insightful and knowledgeable. Although she has only very recently been appointed, she has rapidly gained a thorough understanding of the issues facing the school. The acting headteacher now shares more detailed data with the governing body and, as a result, governors are able to ask more pertinent questions and better hold the school to account.

Curriculum plans have been developed and pupils' skills have been identified. However, these are not consistently adhered to by teachers. Too often activities do not build on what pupils know and what they need to do next.

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

- Improve the quality of leadership, including governance, and strengthen the school's capacity so that both are at least good – satisfactory

External support

The local authority and diocese continue to work closely with the school. They regularly review the school's action and support the school in moving forward. Strong links have been made with the National Leader of Education and his school. This work is well received and is providing valuable support.