

CfBT Inspection Services  
Suite 22

West Lancs Investment Centre T 0300 123 1231

Maple View

Skelmersdale

WN8 9TG

Text Phone: 0161 618 8524

enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk

[www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

Direct T 01695 566 937

Direct F 01695 729 320

Direct email: [jsimmons@cfbt.com](mailto:jsimmons@cfbt.com)



16 June 2014

Mrs Christine Mason  
Acting Headteacher  
Holy Spirit Catholic Primary School  
Brunswick Street  
Parr  
St Helens  
Merseyside  
WA9 2JE

Dear Mrs Mason

### **Special measures monitoring inspection of Holy Spirit Catholic Primary School**

Following my visit to your school on 12 and 13 June 2014, 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 previous monitoring inspection.

The inspection was the third monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in September 2013. 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.

The school may not appoint newly qualified teachers before the next monitoring inspection.

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 Governing Body and the Director of Children and Young People's Services for St Helens.

Yours sincerely

Eileen Mulgrew

**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Annex**

### **The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in September 2013.**

- Improve teaching, so that all pupils make consistently rapid progress and achieve standards that are at least in line with those expected for their age, particularly in mathematics and reading, by ensuring that:
  - all teachers have high expectations of pupils of all abilities, especially boys, and provide them with challenging work
  - lessons capture the interest of every pupil, so that each one of them learns well and makes good progress
  - the assessments made of pupils' achievement and progress are accurate and are used to plan lessons that extend what pupils already know, understand and can do
  - marking gives pupils clear and regular advice on what they need to do to get better.
  
- Bring about immediate improvements in leadership and management by:
  - changing the responsibilities of leaders to match the current needs of the school and making sure that they all have a clear role in improving teaching
  - ensuring that leaders at every level in the school have the highest aspirations for pupils and bring about the rapid changes and improvements that are urgently needed.
  
- Carry out an external review of governance and ensure that every governor has the skills and training to hold the school more rigorously to account.
  
- Improve the behaviour and safety of pupils by:
  - making lessons interesting, so that every pupil keeps concentrating and working hard
  - recording all incidents of misbehaviour and bullying and analysing the information to identify and help any pupils who are repeatedly misbehaving or being bullied
  - producing a new behaviour policy that takes full account of all forms of bullying and providing staff with training in how to identify and deal with these.

## **Report on the third monitoring inspection on 12 and 13 June 2014.**

### **Evidence**

During the visit I observed the school's work, including watching six teachers teach full lessons and several shorter visits to other lessons. I held meetings with you, as acting headteacher, the Chair of the Governing Body, a local authority officer, the leader for mathematics, the leader for pupils with disabilities and special educational needs, the acting learning mentor and a group of eight pupils. I spoke with many more pupils over the two days in class and on the playground and I met with a group of parents and carers after the assembly. I scrutinised documents including pupils' progress information, pupils' work books, records of behaviour incidents, the new anti-bullying policy, the evaluation of the school improvement plan, minutes of governors' meetings and reports from the local authority officer visits to the school.

### **Context**

A teacher left the school at Easter. The acting headteacher will return to her own school in July and the Reception teacher has secured a promotion so will also leave the school in July. The learning mentor is on maternity leave and her role is being covered by two teaching assistants. Two members of staff have returned from maternity leave. An assistant headteacher has been appointed; and during my visit the governors successfully appointed a new headteacher. Both these appointments will start in September.

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

Pupils enjoy their learning and have very positive attitudes to their work. They want to learn and get better at the subjects they study and are willing to concentrate and try hard for their teachers. Pupils who spoke with me were very clear about the purpose for learning and how it will help them in the future. Several commented on how their teachers 'push them to do better' and appreciate the reason they do so. Pupils respond well to interesting activities which are often linked to 'real life' situations which make understanding new concepts easier. During my visit I witnessed several examples of the success of such planning. In a Year 6 mathematics lesson on ratio and proportion, pupils were asked to convert pounds sterling to American dollars. In so doing they worked out links to make conversion quicker and were able to explain in detail the calculations they needed to use. In a Year 3 class, pupils were learning how to read scales accurately by mixing fruit juice cocktails. Working as a group they measured out each flavour of juice very carefully until they reached the right amount of liquid. In both activities pupils were encouraged to use the correct mathematical vocabulary as they developed their speaking and listening skills. Similarly, pupils knew exactly what to do because explanations were clear, resources were readily available and teaching assistants supported pupils well; so pupils made good progress. In some lessons this is not the

case. A few pupils commented that their teachers sometimes do not explain what they are to do clearly so even though they can do the work they become confused.

Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are now enjoying much improved learning areas. The addition of a wooded area gives children the contrast with the hard standing play area of the school. Consequently, children were engrossed in looking for mini-beasts, digging, touching different types of natural materials in the natural area while others made cars and aeroplanes on the hard standing area. This extension of learning experiences is paying off as children have more to talk about and adults intervene effectively to ask questions and model new vocabulary.

Checks on pupils' attainment, completed in February, provide the baseline from which progress can now be measured. The acting headteacher has taken steps to ensure this is an accurate picture of pupils' attainment in most classes. As a result, progress can be seen in the recent checks and pupils feel they are making better progress. In some classes, especially the upper years in Key Stage 2, this progress is better than expected but in others it is not. It is essential that more rapid progress becomes the norm in every class and every subject so that gaps in learning can be tackled in order for pupils to reach at least nationally expected attainment. Pupils say they learn about many subjects and that they have to try hard in all their subjects, for example, making sure their writing in science is of the same standard as in their writing books. From a scrutiny of pupils' workbooks it is clear that many pupils are making better progress; however, there is still an opportunity for pupils to improve presentation and handwriting.

The school's own pupils' progress information suggests that results in tests for Year 6 will be nearer the average across writing, mathematics and spelling, punctuation and grammar. Progress for this group of pupils accelerated over the past year.

### **The quality of teaching**

Through continuous professional training, working with the partner school and a commitment to provide the best for their pupils, teachers' classroom practice is getting better. They are more confident about how pupils learn and plan interesting activities to introduce new concepts and consolidate pupils' learning. Some teachers are further on in the development of this precise teaching than others. Strong, positive relationships between pupils and adults lead to safe, friendly classrooms where pupils build confidence, respond to appropriate praise and are willing to 'have a go' in the knowledge that if they are wrong, they will not be made to feel embarrassed as adults will help them. Teachers are consistently using the agreed behaviour strategies to deal with any issues which may interrupt learning; consequently, in most classrooms lessons flow and pupils make progress. Effective organisation leads to team work, cooperation and a willingness of pupils to take responsibility. I witnessed this in a few lessons. In Year 4 the teacher organised pupils into groups of four and appointed a 'chairperson' with the job of making sure

all members made a contribution to the collection of ideas ready to use in their advertisements. Pupils responded very well so that all views were listened to and considered.

Teachers are becoming more competent at using assessment information to plan learning which is just right for each group. Similarly, teachers are becoming more proficient at moving around the room and intervening so that pupils can be moved on in their learning or can be given more help. However, the skills of some higher ability pupils are still not recognised quickly so that they are not challenged from the start of a lesson. Improvements in marking noted at my last visit continue. However, assessing pupils' learning without the use of tests is still developing and teachers and teaching assistants would benefit from even more chances to discuss how to judge the attainment of a piece of work.

On most occasions I observed teaching assistants contributing to pupils' learning from the start of a lesson by working with a group or by subtly intervening so that specific pupils could understand better. Nevertheless, this was not always the case and it would be worthwhile reviewing the communication between adults in the classrooms so that all know their role throughout a lesson.

Despite the marked improvements in the quality of practice in lessons there is still some work to be done to ensure all teachers have the subject knowledge in mathematics not just to model the correct vocabulary but to insist that pupils use the correct vocabulary and record calculations properly. Likewise, it would be valuable for teachers to build pupils' stamina in writing at length so that they can use the skills they are learning and make better progress.

### **Behaviour and safety of pupils**

Pupils' behaviour around the school and in classrooms has improved vastly. Pupils are welcoming and well mannered. They are much happier now that behaviour is managed well and they know how each teacher will react to instances of poor behaviour. Pupils have been involved in the creation of the anti-bullying policy and are now confident that bullying does not happen and that name calling is, generally, a thing of the past. Pupils say that occasionally a classmate may misbehave in class but it is sorted quickly. Social, moral, spiritual and cultural improvement was observed in a very moving assembly led by the acting headteacher. Pupils remembered how they had sent balloons from school with messages about God's love and listened raptly when the headteacher read out a reply from a person who had found one balloon and the effect the message had on her attitude that day. Pupils behaved splendidly when the head girl and head boy presented certificates to pupils who had achieved well in reading, writing and mathematics over that week. Genuine joy, sharing and appreciation of their classmates' efforts were visibly on show.

Pupils take seriously the opportunities to act responsibly through their roles as 'happy helpers' to look after other pupils on the playground, prefects and their role in the headteacher interviews. However, they have strong views about the standard of the playground; they would like more equipment on the playground and the markings changed so that the hopscotch frame is not in the centre of the football pitch.

Records of behaviour incidents are fully in place and used by the learning mentors to follow through any incident so that trends can be noticed and support can be given to pupils. Attendance and punctuality have improved and exclusions have dropped from last year; there have been no exclusions this year.

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

Steely resolve to improve outcomes for pupils motivates the headteacher and governors to move forward and make suitable decisions for the school. Adults have responded well and staff morale is high; several teachers comment on the 'nurturing' quality of the acting headteacher. Improving the quality of teaching remains the central theme and the partnership with the acting headteacher's own school has been paramount in staff developing classroom skills and knowledge they need to improve pupils' learning.

The school improvement plan is now displayed on a central wall so that all involved can plot the progress the school is making on its journey. Regular monitoring and evaluation of the action taken to improve the quality of teaching, behaviour and safety, and leadership and management are recorded on the plan which is now 'rag rated' (allocated red, amber, green depending on the stage of progress) to recognise successes and point to where action needs to move swifter.

Through working with leaders the acting headteacher has modelled the skills and techniques for successful middle leadership. The mathematics leader and the religious education leader have conducted a scrutiny of teachers' planning, pupils' workbooks, conducted lesson observations and observed the acting headteacher giving feedback to teachers after lesson observations. As a result, their confidence and competence has grown so that they are in a strong position to contribute more fully to the improvement of pupils' achievement. There is still some work to be done to ensure that the leadership of the provision for pupils with disabilities and special educational needs generates more rigorous data which can be used to improve outcomes for this group of pupils.

On the second day of the monitoring inspection governors appointed a new headteacher, with effect from 1 September, to lead the school forward. Together with another new appointment and a clear staffing structure for next academic year, which uses the strengths of existing staff and new staff complementarily, the school is at a critical point in its journey. Governors are under no illusions about the amount

of work which is still needed to move the school out of the category of special measures but do not shy away from this task. They are willing to take hard decisions if they need to. Action taken for governors to build up their own knowledge of the school and attend training remains.

With the appointment of the new headteacher it is essential that governors keep a very watchful eye on developments so that any action taken builds on the firm foundations already established and does not detract from the urgency that is necessary for the school to improve. To this end they have agreed for the acting headteacher to provide support to the new headteacher and for the partnership with St Aidan's (the acting headteacher's own school) to carry on.

### **External support**

The local authority officer took a full part in supporting the governors in the recruitment, selection and interview for the new headteacher. She attends the monthly meeting with governors to check on the progress of the school. Training has been provided for work on the anti-bullying policy, inclusion and tracking pupils with disabilities and special educational needs. Support has been provided by the human resources department of the local authority. As yet there have been no meetings set for the headteacher and Chair of the Governing Body to report to the newly established school improvement board of the local authority.