

CfBT Inspection Services  
Suite 22

West Lancs Investment Centre T 0300 123 1231

Maple View  
Skelmersdale  
WN8 9TG

Text Phone: 0161 6188524  
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk  
[www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

**Direct T** 01695 566857

**Direct F** 01695 729320

**Direct email:** jkinsman@cfbt.com



13 November 2014

Mrs Sandra Hamilton  
Headteacher  
Our Lady and St Swithin's Catholic Primary School  
Parkstile Lane  
Liverpool, Merseyside  
L11 0BQ

Dear Mrs Hamilton

**Special measures monitoring inspection of Our Lady and St Swithin's Catholic Primary School**

Following my visit with Gordon Alston, Additional Inspector, to your school on 11 and 12 November 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 second monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in January 2014. 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 for Children and Young Peoples Services for Liverpool.

Yours sincerely

Joan Bonenfant  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## Annex

### The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in January 2014

- Improve teaching to at least good, so that that all pupils achieve as well as they can, especially in writing and mathematics, by making sure that:
  - all teachers have high expectations of what pupils are capable of achieving and provide work which is at the right level of challenge for their varying abilities
  - all teachers insist that all pupils present their work to a high standard
  - marking is improved so that pupils know how to improve and are given opportunities to respond to teachers' advice and correct their mistakes
  - teachers plan lessons which are engaging and maintain pupils' interest so that their behaviour and attitudes to learning are always at least good
  - pupils have opportunities to develop their literacy and numeracy skills across different subjects
  - pupils make secure and brisk progress in spelling, grammar, punctuation and handwriting as a result of a frequent, specific focus on the development and assessment of these skills
  - pupils can quickly recall important number facts and use this knowledge to solve word problems successfully
  - the provision outdoors in the Early Years Foundation Stage offers children a similar range and quality of learning activities that they experience indoors.
  
- Urgently improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
  - ensuring stable leadership of the school
  - checking the quality of teaching rigorously and holding teachers to account for pupils' achievement
  - developing the roles of middle leaders, including subject leaders, so that they have a good understanding of how well pupils achieve and how well they are taught in their areas of responsibility across the whole school
  - making sure all teachers develop skills to make an accurate assessment of how well pupils are doing
  - ensuring school staff receive more focused and specific support, relevant to their developmental needs.

## **Report on the second monitoring inspection on 11 to 12 November 2104**

### **Evidence**

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the executive headteacher, the acting headteacher, other leaders in the school, groups of pupils, members of the governing body, including the Chair, and a representative from the local authority. Inspectors spoke to pupils informally as they moved around the school and I attended an assembly to commemorate the Armistice. I also met with the parish priest, Father Kenny, and members of the local community who support the school. Inspectors examined samples of pupils' work and other documents, such as attendance records, the single central register and information on pupils' current attainment and progress. I also spoke informally with parents who were attending parents' evening.

### **Context**

The senior leader responsible for literacy returned from maternity leave in September. The member of staff with responsibility for mathematics has relinquished the post. The assistant headteacher has now taken over responsibility for this area of the school's work. A leader has been appointed in charge of the Early Years Foundation Stage. Since the previous monitoring inspection, three members of staff have left the school and the school has received the results of the Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 standard assessment tests.

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

Standards are rising apace across the school. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are now making better progress than they were at the time of the previous inspection. This is because leadership of this area has been strengthened and teaching has improved.

However, the outdoor space available for the Nursery and the Reception class is completely unfit for purpose and unsafe for children to play in. During the inspection the school took immediate action to close this area, on the advice of inspectors; school leaders are only too aware of the inadequacy of this provision.

In response to inspection findings at the previous monitoring inspection, school leaders acted promptly in having plans drawn up to provide a safe and stimulating outdoor play area and by trying their best to secure the required funding. Unfortunately, so far, this has not been forthcoming. As a result the poor quality of the outdoor space remains a serious impediment to children's achievement in the Early Years Foundation Stage and therefore to the removal of special measures.

In Key Stage 1 there has been a marked improvement in both attainment and progress since the previous inspection, particularly in reading and mathematics. In 2014, results of the Year 1 national check of pupils' skills in linking letters with sounds (phonics) were particularly encouraging as they were well above the national average and demonstrate a considerable improvement on the previous year. This success is due in part to the highly effective partnership with a local outstanding school, Our Lady's Bishop Eton Primary School.

Disadvantaged pupils are now making similar progress to other pupils. However, there is still too big a gap between the progress made by pupils with special educational needs and that of other pupils in the school.

In Key Stage 2, again there has been a substantial improvement in attainment. In the standard assessment tests in 2014, the proportion of pupils achieving the expected level in reading, writing and mathematics rose to well above the government's floor standard (this sets the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment in English and mathematics at the end of Year 6). Most pupils, including disadvantaged pupils, made better progress than at the time of the previous inspection. However, as in Key Stage 1, pupils with special educational needs did not do as well as their classmates.

According to information provided by the school, this rise in standards is likely to be sustained in 2015. This was supported by evidence gathered during the inspection by examining pupils' work in their books, which shows a marked improvement on the previous monitoring inspection. For example, in one Year 1 book, examined during the inspection, the pupil showed great pride in her work, the handwriting was exquisite and progress since the start of the term was very evident.

### **The quality of teaching**

Senior and middle leaders have set out clear expectations regarding the quality of teaching and they rigorously check up on how the high standards they expect are being put into practice in the classroom. The vast majority of teachers have responded well to the guidance and support they have received. As a result the quality of teaching is improving overall. However, there remain pockets of weaker teaching that senior leaders have not, as yet, been successful in eradicating.

The local authority has provided all staff with training in planning and this has developed teachers' skills in preparing effective lessons. Staff are working more closely together, which reduces the burden on individual teachers and at the same time shares good practice.

Marking is far more thorough than was formerly the case. During this monitoring inspection, inspectors examined a wide range of books across every year group and in all cases marking was up to date and in line with the school's revised marking policy.

Inspectors found that the presentation of pupils' work is much improved and it is clear that pupils are making better progress than at the time of the previous inspection.

Pupils spoken to during the inspection were wholeheartedly in favour of the new system of marking because they feel it is really helping them to improve their work. Pupils also commented that the work they are given is more challenging than it used to be. For example, one pupil explained that he welcomed the fact that now, 'If you can do the work, teachers give you something that's harder.' Pupils also said that they appreciate the 'working walls' in the classroom. One pupil commented that these are very useful, saying, 'I like going back to the working wall, when I am doing my work, because it helps to refresh my memory.'

Assessment procedures have been revised and the school has a much clearer picture regarding pupils' progress. The information that is gathered on pupils' progress is now more reliable. However, inspectors found that methods of recording progress could be improved further, particularly in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Teaching assistants have received training and are now set targets related to the progress made by pupils for whom they are responsible. Teaching assistants have responded enthusiastically and professionally to school leaders' direction and, as a result, are far more involved in the core purpose of the school.

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

Attendance has improved and the proportion of pupils who are persistently absent has fallen. This is in part because key members of staff, such as the learning mentor, work highly effectively with parents to encourage them to make sure their child attends regularly. Pupils also appreciate the rewards they receive for good attendance.

Pupils' behaviour in lessons is generally of a high standard, particularly when the teaching is of good quality. For example, in one Year 4 lesson, observed during the inspection, pupils' behaviour was exemplary. They were purposefully engaged in a variety of interesting activities that had been expertly set up by the teacher. The lesson had been designed in such a way that all pupils could make at least good progress; pupils were clearly enjoying the lesson and spoke enthusiastically and perceptively about what they were learning. When teaching is weaker, however, pupils still have a tendency to go off task because they see little purpose in the work they have been set.

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

This school is unrecognisable in comparison to what it was like at the time of the previous section 5 full inspection. This is because leadership at all levels is characterised by aspiration, courage, rigour and determination. This has inspired most members of the school community to raise their game, resulting in substantial improvements in pupils' achievement.

The executive headteacher has guided the school expertly; his vast experience and steely perseverance have enabled him to tackle effectively problems that have beleaguered the school for far too long. These skills have been well complemented by those of the acting headteacher: she serves as a moral compass to the school, providing much needed stability and continuity. She is deeply committed to the pupils of Our Lady and St Swithin's and to the local community. Strong, dynamic leadership is further provided by the assistant headteacher, the leader of literacy and the leader of the Early Years Foundation Stage. In combination, these energetic and dedicated individuals have succeeded in persuading the overwhelming majority of staff to get behind them and drive the school forward. It is a tribute to all concerned that so much has been achieved in so short a time.

The school has also benefited immensely from the loyal and committed governing body. The Chair of the Governing Body, who had only recently been appointed at the time of the previous full inspection, is relentless in his ambition to turn this school around, for the sake of the pupils. In so doing, he has provided resolute stewardship through a period of considerable difficulty. As a result the school is emerging all the stronger, teaching is improving and pupils are achieving higher standards. The governing body is in the process of commissioning the external reviews of governance and that of the use of the pupil premium, as recommended at the time of the previous full inspection. This should have been completed by the time of the next monitoring inspection.

The school's engagement with parents and the wider community has improved considerably since the full inspection. When I spoke to parents during the parents' evening, most commented favourably about the leadership of the school and said that they were pleased with their child's progress.

Parents are now much more closely involved in the life of the school than they were in the past. For example, one parent governor came into school to help older pupils understand the dangers of fireworks. Using his skills as a professional special effects make-up artist, he made up a pupil to show the serious disfigurement that a burn can cause. This memorable experience for pupils has helped them to assess risks and keep themselves safe outside school.

School leaders have been successful in harnessing the skills of staff, pupils and parents in transforming the physical environment of the school. Inspirational,

enchanting artwork, such as the door painted as the 'Tardis' that leads into the nurture room, stimulates pupils' imagination and lifts the spirit. Furthermore, visits from local celebrities, such as the author Frank Cottrell Boyce and Wayne Rooney, the England and Manchester United footballer, have raised morale. As the pupils said, 'so many things are happening!'

School leaders have successfully garnered the support of a critical mass of staff to drive forward improvement. It is unfortunate that a very small number of staff are still reluctant to embrace the necessary changes to custom and practice that have been introduced by the leadership team. This residual resistance and negativity continue to represent a substantial barrier to Our Lady and St Swithin's rapidly becoming a good school.

### **External support**

The local authority continues to provide highly effective support to this school. Training for staff has helped to raise expectations and improve teaching. Very productive links have been established with local schools, such as Our Lady's Bishop Eton Primary, Whitefield Primary, Croxteth Community Primary and the De La Salle Academy. The school is also involved in an innovative project to raise standards and improve teacher training with Liverpool Hope University.

### **Priorities for further improvement**

- The school must address with urgency the deficiencies in the Early Years Foundation Stage outdoor play area so that children can play safely and develop the skills they need to make good progress.