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19 March 2015

Mr Paul Towey

Headteacher

Our Lady and St Philomena's Catholic Primary School

Sparrow Hall Road

Liverpool

Merseyside

L9 6BU

Dear Mr Towey

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

Following my visit with Eithne Proffitt, Additional Inspector, to your school on 17 and 18 March 2015, 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 September 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 Archdiocese of Liverpool, the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director for Children and Young Peoples Services for Liverpool.

Yours sincerely

Leszek Iwaskow  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## Annex

### **The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in September 2014.**

- Take urgent steps to improve the quality of teaching throughout the school so that it is at least good, in order to raise standards for all groups of pupils in all key stages, so that they can make good or better progress by:
  - ensuring that the basic skills in reading, writing and mathematics are taught consistently well in all classes, including in the early years, with a focus on improving writing in particular
  - raising teachers' expectations regarding the progress pupils should make, especially for disadvantaged pupils
  - using information about what pupils know and can do to set work that is suitably difficult, especially for the most able, and which helps them to learn well
  - ensuring that pupils have the opportunity to respond to teachers' marking and to improve their work themselves
  - planning work which pupils find interesting and challenging so as to improve their concentration and attitudes to learning.
  
- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management at all levels including governance by:
  - establishing rigorous systems to measure the performance of staff and the impact they have on raising standards for pupils and ensure that governors hold leaders to account for doing so
  - ensuring that planned improvement is rapid and keeps to tight timescales
  - setting up procedures to check that assessments of pupils' skills and knowledge are accurate
  - ensuring rigorous and specific targets are set for individual pupils which accelerate the progress of those who are underachieving so that they catch up quickly
  - regularly checking on the progress that all different groups of pupils make and taking swift action if any group are not achieving as well as they should.
  
- Improve pupils' behaviour and safety by:
  - ensuring teaching is stimulating and motivates pupils well so that they develop good attitudes to learning
  - ensuring all teachers have the skills to manage pupils' behaviour effectively
  - improving record keeping so that systems are rigorous and all incidents of poor behaviour are noted along with the impact of any action taken in order to prevent reoccurrence.
  
- Improve pupils' attendance by:
  - ensuring that work with families to reduce absence is effective
  - checking and analysing patterns of absence in relation to specific groups, especially disadvantaged pupils, and using this information to identify the specific

actions needed to improve attendance and reduce the proportion of pupils that are frequently absent.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

An external review of the school's use of the pupil premium should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

## **Report on the second monitoring inspection on 17 to 18 March 2015.**

### **Evidence**

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised a wide range of school and associated documentation, external monitoring reports including the review of governance, evidence of classroom monitoring as well as a range of documentation linked to behaviour and safety. Inspectors met with the headteacher and seconded deputy headteacher as well as several other key teaching staff. In addition, discussions were held with several groups of pupils and a representative from the local authority. Telephone conversations were also held with the Chair of the Governing Body and with the headteacher who has recently carried out a review of pupil premium funding (additional government money). Inspectors also talked to a small number of parents at the beginning of the school day as they brought their children into school. All of the teaching observations were joint observations with senior leaders. Teaching sessions were observed in every year group in the school and focussed specifically on the impact of the teaching on pupils' learning and the quality of work in their books. In addition Her Majesty's Inspector completed a book scrutiny covering pupils' work in English, mathematics, science, history and geography.

### **Context**

There have been some significant staff changes recently. The substantive deputy headteacher has left the school. A deputy headteacher has been seconded and continues to support the school. Two classes have new teachers from the beginning of January. One teacher has returned from maternity leave at February half-term. There has been some restructuring of the governing body with governors being allocated specific responsibilities.

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

A trend of decline has been halted but not yet reversed. Although there are 'green shoots' of recovery evident these remain fragile. Inconsistencies between classes and groups of pupils are holding back improvement. Disadvantaged pupils in particular are making poor progress overall.

In the early years, there are signs of improvement with the percentage of pupils expected to reach a good level of development doubling to 46%. However, this remains well below the national average and few disadvantaged pupils reach this level. At Key Stage 1, there is expected to be a slight increase in the pass rate to 56%. Again this will remain below national averages. Although standards are beginning to improve, concerns remain about writing and mathematics where few pupils make more than expected progress with girls significantly out performing boys. At Key Stage 2, outcomes for this year are predicted to show minimal change

and the school is in danger of missing national floor standards for the second year. This cohort does, however, contain a large number of pupils (20%) with special educational needs. The gap between disadvantaged pupils and their peers is significantly large. Inconsistencies across the school make it difficult to pinpoint trends between groups as these vary considerably from class to class and between subjects. In the meantime, there remains a heavy reliance on intervention strategies to raise standards to an acceptable level. Few pupils are making more than expected progress, including the most able.

The current focus on reading, however, is proving beneficial and, although not yet evident across all classes in terms of outcomes, is engaging the pupils. They have noted the efforts being made through guided reading and phonics sessions to develop a greater love of reading. As one older pupil remarked – 'I hated reading before – now I like it!' They were positive about the new library and the recent purchase of books which were considered 'more interesting'. Books are changed regularly and pupils are expected to read at home. Although not yet having an impact on overall standards, the new found enthusiasm for reading augurs well for the future.

Writing remains a concern and boys tend to lag behind the girls. In English lessons, pupils produce much better written work, especially when they are heavily guided. However, in other subjects the quality of their written work is less good because pupils lack the confidence to adapt and transfer what they have learnt in English to writing in science, history, geography etc. Often the tasks set in these other subjects do not support writing in detail as teachers lack the requisite subject knowledge or confidence to set appropriate tasks. Too many low level or occupying tasks do not allow pupils to utilise their writing skills effectively. Spelling also remains a major concern with even more able pupils making frequent errors which, although identified through marking, are not being corrected.

### **The quality of teaching**

Teaching is inconsistent across classes and subjects. Far too much teaching still lacks conviction and rigour and is not challenging pupils effectively. For example, during observation of a guided reading session, where pupils were expected to work unsupervised, those in the reading corner changed their books several times failing to benefit from the opportunity to read for pleasure. In the early years, activities, especially in the outdoor area, are not planned well enough to maximise learning for all children in all areas. Too often, activities do not allow pupils to progress because valuable time is lost and adults do not always provide adequate supervision or support. Boys frequently dominated the outdoor area and little learning was taking place.

In too many lessons teacher expectations are not high enough. Teachers focus often on what they are going to teach and not what and how well pupils are going to learn

from these activities. Also, teachers are rarely considering the need to plan a sequence of lessons to ensure the progressive development of knowledge, skills and understanding and then adapt them as appropriate. In contrast, in an effective history lesson, the teacher engaged pupils with an activity in which they pretended to be archaeologists and they dug out artefacts buried in a sand tray. There was clear questioning and direction. The teacher was also aware of the need to build on their initial excitement and interest by consolidating their learning next lesson. As a result, she had planned for her pupils to research and explore the importance of the artefacts in order to enhance their learning of Ancient Egypt. Too many lessons are task driven. This is especially noticeable in subjects other than English and mathematics where learning is fragmented and topics often left incomplete because teachers lack the subject knowledge to teach these subjects effectively. Higher ability pupils in particular are often being occupied by mundane tasks and not making sufficient progress.

In English books, in particular, the quality of marking and feedback has improved. It remains more cursory across other subjects. Currently, marking has become a management process with little evidence that pupils are being given the time or the opportunity to act on the advice. There was little evidence of redrafting work or correcting spelling. Where lessons are well structured and planned, pupils engage with the work and make much better progress. In a good guided reading session, activities were well planned and pupils were clear about routines. They worked purposely on the activities the teacher had planned and were benefiting from the clear organisation and structure of the lesson. However, this practice is not yet consistent across the school. In another session, pupils were occupied with tasks which did not promote improvements in reading. In too many lessons, teachers lack the subject knowledge to set tasks which will stretch or stimulate pupils' imaginations. Too many tasks are mundane or merely occupy pupils. School leaders are aware that improving teaching is necessary if standards are to improve more rapidly. They also realise that this is also their most challenging task.

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

Pupils identified that general behaviour around the school is improving. Inspectors observed pupils queuing in an orderly fashion at the beginning of the school day, and after break and lunchtime. Pupils open doors for adults and behaviour on corridors is positive. They are inquisitive and readily ask questions of visitors. Pupils recognised that school leaders were now visible around the school including outside. They feel this has been instrumental in supporting improvements in behaviour and they feel that adults are approachable and supportive.

Behaviour in lessons has also improved, although pupils did acknowledge that disruptions do still occur. Inspectors did not observe any disruptive behaviour during this monitoring inspection, apart from in the early years where the boys were over boisterous in the outside environment due to the fact that the planned activities and

supervision were not appropriate. Inspectors did, however, note that pupils' attitudes to learning vary greatly depending on how stimulating their lessons are. In too many lessons pupils lost concentration, daydreamed and wasted time especially when mundane tasks were being set.

Attendance remains a concern and is not improving quickly enough. School leaders do not have a firm grip on the data analysis or on the strategies to reward and raise the profile of good attendance. The gap between disadvantaged pupils and their peers remains wide and poor attendance by these pupils is one of the contributory factors which are preventing the school from closing the attainment gap. Currently, actions taken are too reactive rather than pro-active. The action plan has clear strategies identified but these are not being pursued with the vigour needed and are currently being addressed piecemeal with only limited impact. Ironically, the only class where attendance has improved significantly was the one where the most engaging teaching was observed by inspectors.

Safeguarding meets minimum requirements. Safeguarding concerns raised have been shown to have been dealt with appropriately and include parental support and involvement. However, systems and recording of incidents are random and ineffective in providing immediate relevant safeguarding information. This was also an issue raised at the last inspection.

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

School leaders and governors have worked hard with support from the local authority to ensure that the school has begun to turn the corner. The systems and structures essential for the smooth running of the school are now in place. However, putting systems into place is the relatively easy part of the improvement process; ensuring these are working and having an impact is the difficult challenge that leaders now face. Many areas of weakness are being tackled but there is also an acknowledgment that much still remains to be done. Staffing issues are being resolved and staffing turbulence, which has been a problem in the past, is much reduced. A positive atmosphere pervades the school and there is a greater sense of purpose and stability. A range of management structures, such as performance management, which were missing previously, are now in place. Whole-school policies, including calculation, reading and marking, are also being implemented. However, these are not yet being applied consistently across the school and are not yet embedded as part of everyday routines. Tracking and assessment structures are now more rigorous and accurate. These are beginning to provide a useful tool in helping to identify those pupils who are falling behind in their work and targeting intervention strategies more appropriately. School leaders are fully aware of the current inconsistencies between classes and different groups of pupils. Monitoring procedures are established, including regular observations of lessons as well as scrutiny of pupils' work. Although these are useful in analysing current classroom practice, there is little evidence to show that this process is improving teaching and



learning. Issues are identified but there are no procedures in place to follow up to check if improvements are being made. There is little evidence that monitoring is well linked to appropriate guidance and advice. Currently, too much is being left to chance and the initiative of individuals.

The curriculum remains a work in progress. Although most subjects are now taught discretely, the lack of a subject leadership structure means that much of what is taught outside English and mathematics is fragmented and frequently not taught to a sufficient depth. Teachers are still tending to pick and choose what they will teach and when. They lack clear guidance and they are not making the best use of the resources available to upskill their lessons. Currently, the lack of subject leadership, except for English and mathematics, does not support improvements in teaching and learning. Leaders are aware that there is an urgent need to audit staff expertise and allocate responsibilities accordingly. Restructuring is planned in the immediate future.

Parents are increasingly positive about the school. Those who inspectors spoke to as they brought their children to school recognised the improvements that have been put in place over the past year. They especially appreciated the focus on reading and felt that school leaders and teachers were more accessible than previously. A greater sense of community is now being developed.

Governors are fully supportive and remain committed to improving the school. A good working partnership has developed between the governors, school leaders and the local authority in monitoring the progress being made. A governors' action committee has been set up and meets every month. Governor representatives also attend the project group meetings which are held each half term with the local authority. These meetings provide opportunities to receive regular progress reports, discuss support and hold school leaders to account. A review of governance has been completed recently which identified clear improvement in the execution of governors' roles. This credited them with much greater involvement in the school. Governors have undertaken a range of recent training including understanding pupil data. They have used this to cross reference and challenge what they are told by school leaders. They have firmly tackled staff competency issues and continue to do so. Governors are now increasingly pro-active in providing support but also greater challenge to the headteacher. A governance action plan is now in place not only to continue to improve governance but also to ensure that current momentum is maintained.

A review of pupil premium spending has been completed very recently but the report has not yet been published.

## **External support**

The school continues to rely on good support from the local authority and local schools. This support has been necessary in the short term for the school to function effectively. Staff secondments have been vital in ensuring the school had a full complement of teachers. The school has received extensive consultant support for the early years, as well as for English and mathematics. The school currently has no one trained as a special educational needs coordinator and, while this is being rectified, receives specialist support one day a week from the Liverpool Learning Partnership. The School Improvement Partner visits the school on a regular fortnightly basis to monitor improvement and support leadership. The local authority is also in attendance at the project group meetings which monitor progress on a regular basis. The school has also received funding from the archdiocese to improve the school environment. Good partnerships have been established which are benefiting and supporting the school very well.

## **Priorities for further improvement**

- Improve teaching and learning across all subjects by:
  - (i) improving teachers' subject knowledge to enable them to teach a broad range of subjects with confidence and conviction
  - (ii) ensuring that teachers refocus their planning on learning and less on what they expect to cover in a lesson
  - (iii) raising teacher expectations of what pupils can achieve in order to provide greater challenge to their learning
  - (iv) developing subject leadership to support improvement in teachers' subject knowledge and their confidence and ability to provide stimulating lessons which will engage learners.
  
- In the immediate short term, focus on improving the quality of punctuation, grammar and especially spelling by providing more rigour and structure in the way it is corrected and improved.
  
- Ensure that monitoring has greater impact on improving teaching and learning by not only identifying concerns but ensuring that weaker practice is challenged and improved through appropriate support.