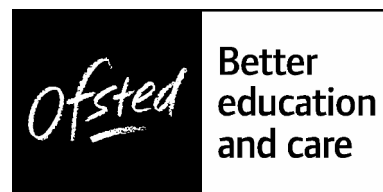


Tribal Group  
1-4 Portland Square  
Bristol  
BS2 8RR

T 0845 123 6001  
F 0845 123 6002

Ofsted helpline  
08456 404045  
edhelpline@ofsted.gov.uk



Mr Peter Thorpe  
The Acting Headteacher  
Our Lady's Catholic Primary School  
Watkin Street  
Fenton  
Stoke-on-Trent  
Staffordshire  
ST4 4NP

19 October 2006

Dear Mr Thorpe

## SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF OUR LADY'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

### Introduction

Following my visit with David Carrington, Additional Inspector, and Elaine Taylor HMI to your school on 4 and 5 October 2006, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the second monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures in November 2005.

This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website. Please inform the Regional Inspection Service Provider of any factual inaccuracies within 24 hours of the receipt of this letter.

### Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents, and met with the acting headteacher, groups of pupils, the chair of governors and a representative of the local authority.

### Context

Following the first monitoring visit there have been some changes in staffing, including the appointment of an acting headteacher, who is in the school three days a week, and a new chair of governors. A new headteacher has been appointed together with a new curriculum leader for Key Stage 2 for

January 2007. The teacher with responsibility for the Reception class is currently on maternity leave.

### Achievement and standards

The Key Stage 1 results for Level 2 have improved from 2005 and there has been an increase in the number of pupils gaining Level 3 both in reading and mathematics. There was a slight decline in the results for writing at Level 3. Results at Key Stage 2 at Levels 4 and 5 have improved compared with those in 2005. The percentages of pupils gaining Level 5 are still below national averages in English, mathematics and science. The school has correctly identified the barriers to pupils improving their performance and understands why it has improved in science and mathematics. Progress seen in lessons overall is satisfactory. There is no significant difference in the progress of boys and girls. Tracking information is now used to identify pupils at risk of failing and appropriate interventions are put in place. Discussions have begun to take place with subject leaders and teaching staff to share test information. Planning is beginning to be linked to National Curriculum levels, although there is insufficient differentiation of pupils' learning to ensure pupils make better than satisfactory progress.

Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities are given capable support that enables them to make satisfactory progress. The very few pupils who speak English as an additional language also make satisfactory progress.

### Personal development and well-being

Since the inspection in November 2005 the school has worked effectively to improve pupils' personal development and well-being. The majority of pupils are interested in their lessons and they work steadily to complete their tasks. Attendance levels are above average, which reflects the pupils' enjoyment of school. Behaviour is generally good in lessons and around the school. The behaviour of pupils during assembly is outstanding. There are a few pupils who are not as well motivated as the others. All staff deal capably with any disturbances and the occasional poor behaviour of a few pupils does not affect the learning of the rest. There have been no exclusions since the acting headteacher joined the school which is a significant improvement on the situation at the start of the last school year.

Pupils have a sound understanding of healthy lifestyles and they know how to keep safe. They also have a good sense of the community within school and the need to support each other. The newly introduced system where Year 5 pupils team up with those in Year 1 is popular with the pupils. It is already making a good contribution to their personal development. Children in the Foundation Stage have good opportunities to build personal and social skills and to share their feelings and ideas. Older pupils' preparation for the next stage of education and future life is not yet complete as basic literacy and numeracy skills show some weaknesses.

## Quality of provision

Teachers produce satisfactory teaching plans which follow a common format and state clearly what pupils are expected to learn and how and when learning is to be undertaken. The learning objectives do not yet show the different outcomes for pupils working at a range of National Curriculum levels and thus do not relate to pupils' individual learning targets. There are good classroom displays, some of which help pupils to identify the level at which they are working and their next steps. All teachers regularly mark work and some provide useful comments that help pupils understand how to improve.

Teaching overall is satisfactory. Improvements in assessment procedures have ensured that in satisfactory lessons teachers regularly check pupils' progress. In the most effective lessons questioning was used very successfully to help pupils to think for themselves. In too many lessons, however, teachers talked for too long. This limited the time for pupils to develop their understanding and meant that teachers were not secure in assessing the progress pupils had made in their understanding.

Pupils with learning difficulties receive satisfactory support from well trained teaching assistants. They work most effectively when pupils are in small groups. Opportunities are missed, though, to support pupils at the start and end of lessons to ensure they make better progress.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in November 2005

- ensure that teachers make better use of assessment information to plan lessons and help pupils understand how they can improve – satisfactory.

## Leadership and management

The strong leadership and vision of the acting headteacher has had an impact on the teachers' understanding of what needs to be done to improve. As a result, many strategies have been put in place to monitor performance and these give an accurate picture of the school's strengths and areas for development. The senior leadership team now has a clear baseline from which members can measure improvement. This has led to the identification of the training needs of all staff which have been promptly addressed. However, there is still too little modelling and sharing of good practice.

The senior leadership team forms a strong partnership. There is limited capacity to improve further at present because the inexperienced assistant headteacher has additional oversight of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities, key stage responsibilities, and teaches almost full time. She has worked hard to develop management systems for the learning assistants which have improved their effectiveness in lessons. The senior leadership team has also put in place structures that help all teachers improve the levels of challenge in mathematics and science. Subject coordination overall is still

weak because there will not be a subject coordinator for mathematics until January 2007. Some weaknesses identified in science are related to problems pupils have in understanding graphical information. In science and English information on pupils' progress is now analysed more thoroughly by senior managers and is being used to help teachers to improve planning.

Governance has improved and is now satisfactory. The new chair of governors has a good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. This information has been used to form appropriate committees and to link governors to subjects. Subject coordinators now explain pupils' performance when invited to talk to the governing body. These improved procedures now mean that the governors are well placed to fulfil their role as critical friends to the school.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in November 2005:

- ensure the headteacher and senior leadership team check agreed ways of working are implemented and then rigorously evaluated for their effectiveness – satisfactory
- ensure the headteacher and senior managers evaluate more carefully and governors question more thoroughly, the reasons for variation in pupils' progress from one year to the next to identify more effectively strengths and weaknesses in teaching and the curriculum – satisfactory
- introduce more effective systems to ensure that teaching is providing a suitable level of challenge for all pupils particularly in mathematics and science – satisfactory.

#### External support

The local authority has a clear view of the school's strengths and weaknesses and has used this information to tailor support to the school. The school improvement advisor has continued to challenge the school and has ensured that the newly qualified teacher has an appropriate package of support. The school is still very dependent upon the support from the local authority.

#### Main Judgements

Progress since being subject to special measures – satisfactory.

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – satisfactory.

#### Priorities for further improvement

- Ensure that teachers' planning provides activities matched to pupils' targets for learning.
- Ensure that teachers' questions help pupils to explain their thinking and understanding so that teachers know what pupils have learnt.

- Ensure that learning support assistants help pupils to participate fully at the beginning and end of lessons.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the chair of governors and the Director of Children's Services for Stoke-on-Trent.

Yours sincerely

Michelle Parker  
H M Inspector