

4 April 2007

Mrs S Evans  
Headteacher  
The Oaks Community Primary School  
Rochester Drive  
Ellesmere Port  
Merseyside  
CH65 6EX

Dear Mrs Evans

## SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF THE OAKS COMMUNITY PRIMARY SCHOOL

### Introduction

Following my visit to your school on 28 March 2007, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the third monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures in February 2006.

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

Observations were made of lessons in each class. Discussions were held with the headteacher, two groups of pupils, and the subject leaders for English, mathematics and science. Documents and samples of pupils' work were also scrutinised.

### Context

Since the previous monitoring visit in November 2006, different teachers have taken on the leadership of English and mathematics. One teacher has returned to work following absence. Two midday supervisors have left and have not been replaced.

### Achievement and standards

The senior leaders have introduced effective strategies to improve pupils' achievement through better teaching and learning. Pupils are making better progress in their lessons and more are now working at the expected levels for their ages. Improving attendance and more consistent teaching are helping to increase the rate of progress made by pupils of all

abilities. Though standards have been raised, overall they remain below age-related expectations.

Since the last monitoring visit, analysis of assessment information has very clearly identified those pupils who are not making the progress needed to meet their end-of-year targets. As a result, teachers are intervening at an earlier stage to tackle underachievement. Most pupils are responding to the challenges being set for them and making better progress in relation to their individual targets. Learning mentors are making a good contribution to raising pupils' confidence and self-esteem and by supporting parents and carers. Their impact is most marked on the pupils in Years 4 and 5 who had fallen behind in their literacy and numeracy skills.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in February 2006:

- The school needs to raise standards and achievement in English, mathematics and science throughout the school – satisfactory

### Personal development and well-being

The attitudes and behaviour of pupils are much better in class and around the school. Pupils are very polite to visitors, reflecting pride in their school. Attendance has improved. It is higher than at the previous visit and is only just below the school's target for the year. There have been no exclusions this school year. Parents are involved more in their children's learning. Numbers attending parents' evenings, for example, have risen from 41% in October 2006 to 62% in February 2007. The majority of pupils take a school meal at lunchtime, and they say how much they enjoy the food. They value the things the school is doing for them, especially the much-improved outside play areas and new play equipment.

### Quality of provision

No inadequate lessons were seen during this visit and all lessons had some good features, some more than others. In the best lessons, teachers set high expectations and immediately captured pupils' interest so they quickly became engaged in their learning. Teachers use their day-to-day assessment of pupils' understanding increasingly effectively to plan next steps. The marking and annotation of pupils' work, with more consistent use of targets, are helping pupils know what they need to do to improve. Better displays in classrooms help to create purposeful learning environments. Good use of the improved facilities for information and communication technology is also enhancing learning.

The curriculum is improving through a developing range of visits and visitors. For example, a visit to the theatre is underpinning work in literacy and in art, a subject pupils say they 'really enjoy'. While there are more opportunities for writing, insufficient use of numeracy is made in other subjects. Transition arrangements are developing well, especially with the local children's centre.

Systems to monitor pupils' progress in English and mathematics are developing well. Information is kept in a way that allows easy analysis of how well all pupils are achieving. However, the systems remain less robust in science. Teachers check each pupil's progress

with subject and senior leaders. Appropriate steps are then taken to intervene, with increasingly effective contributions from teaching assistants. Improving support is therefore being provided for vulnerable pupils. For example, 'pen portraits' of pupils are used well to assist integration.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in February 2006:

- The quality of teaching needs to be consistently good enough to enable the children in Key Stages 1 and 2 to reach much higher standards and to achieve as well as they should - satisfactory
- Improvements to the curriculum are required so that it provides children with more enrichment and meets their needs more specifically - satisfactory

### Leadership and management

The headteacher continues to take a strong lead in action to improve the school. Other staff make increasingly effective contributions in their specific areas of responsibility. The role of subject leaders is developing and subject 'checklists' are being used to establish better consistency of approach. Senior leaders regularly observe and evaluate lessons but their findings do not focus enough on the progress made by pupils. Subject leaders' regular monitoring of the pupils' work usefully complements lesson observations. This monitoring has been extended to include subjects other than English, mathematics and science. Staff feel well supported by managers and the school governors, and continuing professional development contributes securely to their increasing effectiveness.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in February 2006:

- The school needs to continue to improve and implement the management systems that have recently been introduced, so that performance is better monitored and evaluated in order that many areas of provision are improved. The appointment of a permanent headteacher is key to this improvement – good

## External support

The local authority continues to monitor the performance of the school effectively and gives a good level of support through its consultants. The school receives regular well focused visits from its link adviser that systematically monitor the impact of changes against each area for improvement. The school has also worked with neighbouring schools.

## Main Judgements

Progress since being subject to special measures – satisfactory

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – satisfactory

Newly qualified teachers may be appointed.

## Priorities for further improvement

- The issues identified in the February 2006 inspection continue to be the most important things the school should focus on.

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

Yours sincerely

Henry Moreton

Additional Inspector