

Tribal Group
1-4 Portland
Square
Bristol
BS2 8RR
T 0845 123 6001
F 0845 123 6002

T 08456 40 40 40
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk



22 November 2007

Mrs M O'Friel
The Headteacher
St Edmund's Catholic Primary School
Rosebery Street
Springhill
Birmingham
West Midlands
B18 7PA

Dear Mrs O'Friel

SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF ST EDMUND'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

Following my visit with Nina Bee, Additional Inspector, to your school on 13 and 14 November 2007, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the fifth monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures in November 2005. The monitoring inspection report is attached and the main judgements are set out below.

Progress since being subject to special measures – satisfactory.

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – satisfactory.

Newly qualified teachers may not be appointed.

This letter and monitoring inspection report 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.

I am copying this letter and the monitoring inspection report to the Secretary of State, the chair of governors, the Strategic Director of Learning and Culture in Birmingham and the Director of Education for the Diocese of Birmingham.

Yours sincerely

Mark Mumby
H M Inspector

SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING OF ST EDMUND'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

Report from the fifth monitoring inspection: 13 and 14 November 2007

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents, and met with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher, the science coordinator, the coordinator for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, a group of pupils, the chair of governors and a representative from the local authority (LA). They also had informal conversations with most members of the teaching staff.

Context

Since the last monitoring visit two temporary teachers have left the school. In September 2007 three new teachers took up posts and the deputy headteacher relinquished her class teaching role in order to fulfil her responsibilities as a member of the senior leadership team.

Achievement and standards

The school sets challenging targets in reading, writing and mathematics for the progress expected of all of the pupils in Years 1 to 6. Its assessment data indicates that the majority of pupils are achieving these targets in reading in all year groups. However, the progress made by pupils in writing and mathematics is more limited and far too many pupils in Year 1 and Year 4 did not reach their targets in writing and mathematics in July. The progress seen in lessons and in pupils' books is also inconsistent. In the better lessons, most pupils of average ability make good progress. However, the progress made by the more able pupils is frequently limited because the tasks they are set are too easy.

Although more pupils are now beginning to make better progress than in the past, the gap between what a significant proportion of pupils are capable of and what they are achieving is still too wide.

Whilst the school's recent focus to raise standards in English and mathematics is showing signs of success, standards in science have fallen. The attainment of Year 6 pupils in national assessments in 2007 and the progress these pupils made during Key Stage 2 were exceptionally low. Work seen in lessons and pupils' books confirms that this underachievement is evident throughout the school.

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

- raise standards in Years 1 to 6 and remedy the weaknesses in English and mathematics – satisfactory.

Personal development and well-being

Pupils are polite and courteous. Their behaviour around the school at breaktimes is good. In lessons, most pupils display positive attitudes to their work. However, there are times when pupils become over exuberant. As a result, classrooms become excessively lively and pupils' progress slows. In other lessons, classroom routines are not sufficiently well established and too much time is wasted gaining pupils' attention. Consequently, these pupils do not make as much progress as they could.

Quality of provision

Although the majority of lessons continue to be satisfactory, there are still too few lessons that are good or better and too many that are inadequate. As a result, too many pupils are not making as much progress as they could. Although the school is developing a teaching and learning policy, this has not yet been completed. Consequently, there is not a consistent approach to teaching and learning throughout the school.

In the best lessons teaching has continued to improve since the last monitoring visit. Teachers use their good subject knowledge to plan interesting lessons. Questioning is used well to assess pupils' progress and to help them move on in their learning. Teaching assistants are effective in providing good quality support, particularly for less able pupils. Lessons move at a fast pace. As a result, pupils have good attitudes to their learning and make good progress.

On too many occasions pupils do not learn as much as they could because lessons are not well planned. Assessment is not used well enough to check how well pupils are doing or to ensure that activities are sufficiently challenging, particularly for the more able pupils. Whilst some activities are too easy or too hard, others are not appropriate to meet the intended learning outcomes for the lesson. Teachers' expectations of behaviour are frequently not high enough. As a result, pupils misbehave and valuable learning time is lost. Classroom routines are not well established. For example, on occasions pupils do not listen carefully or respond appropriately to teachers' instructions. As a result, pupils become off task and too few of them answer the often well focused questions that are directed to the class. The pace of these lessons is frequently too slow. Consequently, pupils get distracted and make too little progress.

The science curriculum is inadequate. Pupils do not have enough opportunities to plan investigations, record results and present their findings. Science lessons are often overly directed by teachers and learning activities and resources are not always well organised. For example, in two lessons seen, pupils were unable to see what the teacher or another child was doing when they were talking to the class. Written work is insufficiently focused on scientific content. Teachers' expectations regarding pupils' recording of information are too low.

The quality of marking of pupils' work is inconsistent. At its best, it provides useful guidance to help pupils improve their work. However, too much marking is superficial and, at times, teachers' writing does not present a good model to pupils. Although pupils have targets in English and mathematics, too little reference is made to these in teachers' comments. Targets and learning activities for pupils with learning difficulties are frequently not well enough matched to the needs detailed in their individual education plans.

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

- improve the quality of teaching in Years 1 to 6 – satisfactory.

Leadership and management

The strong leadership of the recently appointed headteacher has been a significant factor in bringing about improvements to the quality of teaching and learning in the school. She has set a very clear educational direction with high expectations of each member of the staff team in order to achieve the best outcomes for all of the pupils. As a result, there are already signs of significant improvement. For example, carefully targeted work has already increased the rate of progress for most pupils in English and mathematics. However, recent significant changes to the teaching staff have generated further training needs and this is placing additional pressure on the existing expertise within the school.

Rigorous monitoring and evaluation activities are now used routinely to check on the effectiveness of improvement initiatives and identify areas of weakness. These activities are well documented and provide the governing body and leadership team with a clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. However, decisive actions to address persistent shortcomings, such as weak teaching, are not always implemented quickly enough. As a result, there are still too many pupils who are not making as much progress as they could. Furthermore, not all senior leaders have been sufficiently proactive in addressing areas of weakness. As a result, underachievement in science has gone unchecked for some time.

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

- take a more rigorous approach to addressing areas of weakness – satisfactory.

External support

The local authority has rightly begun to reduce its level of support since the appointment of a substantive leadership team. It has a good understanding of the school's needs and has provided appropriate support through the Intensifying Support Programme and by providing staff training.

Priorities for further improvement

- Make effective use of the good practice that already exists in the school to improve the quality and consistency of teaching and ensure that learning is good or better in all lessons.
- Take urgent action to address the shortcomings in the science curriculum and ensure that all pupils are given appropriate opportunities to develop their skills of scientific investigation, recording and analysis.