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6 December 2007

Mrs G Howell
The Acting Headteacher
St Catherine's Catholic Primary School
Highdown Drive
Littlehampton
West Sussex
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Dear Mrs Howell

**SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF ST CATHERINE'S
CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL, LITTLEHAMPTON**

Following my visit to your school on 28 and 29 November 2007, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to confirm the inspection findings.

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

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 and the Director of Children's and Young People's Services for West Sussex.

Yours sincerely

Stephen Long
H M Inspector

SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING OF ST CATHERINE'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL, LITTLEHAMPTON

Report from the fourth monitoring inspection: 28 and 29 November 2007

Evidence

The inspector observed the school's work, scrutinised documents, and met with the acting and consultant headteachers, a group of pupils, the chair and vice chair of governors and other staff.

Context

The acting headteacher has been confirmed in post until the end of this academic year. A consultant headteacher has been appointed to support her on one day per week, the previous consultant headteacher having finished her contract last term. The governing body plan to complete the process for appointing a substantive headteacher next term, with a view to the person appointed starting in September of next year. The number of classes at the school has been reduced from six to five. This reflects a fall last year in the number of pupils attending the school, although the number has now stabilised. Four new teachers joined at the start of this term; two are part time and share the teaching of a class and for two of the new teachers this is their first teaching post.

Achievement and standards

Standards remain below average as shown by the most recent national assessment tests. Higher results at Key Stage 1 in mathematics and writing were countered by a fall in reading. At Key Stage 2, an improvement in mathematics was offset by falls in science and English, again with particular concerns over pupils' reading. These results reflect widespread past underachievement rather than pupils' current progress, and expectations of national assessments for this academic year are much improved. The school has set challenging targets based on pupils' starting points and more pupils are on target to meet, and exceed, the nationally expected levels at both key stages in mathematics, English and science.

Much of the improvement in pupils' achievement is due to increasingly effective intervention where underachievement is identified. The impact is most evident in mathematics but is gathering momentum in English. Class teachers, subject leaders and the special educational needs coordinator are working collectively to ensure better provision for these pupils in everyday lessons. Additional sessions in mathematics play a key role in moving pupils on. In English, a growing focus on reading involves better use of structured schemes, guided reading and reading at home. As a result, pupils are starting to enjoy books. Although achievement in science is improving because of stronger teaching and curricular content, intervention to tackle any underachievement is less well developed. This is because the school has less assessment data about pupils' progress in science over time and is therefore not well placed to identify slow progress toward targets.

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

- raise standards in English, mathematics and science and improve pupils' achievement, taking swift and effective action when they do not make enough progress – satisfactory.

Personal development and well-being

Most pupils behave well and enjoy school because of the calmer and more purposeful atmosphere now prevalent. This is reflected in the continued improvement in attendance, which is in line with the national average. Many pupils contribute positively to the school, for example through the school council and through the good relationships which most have with each other. Attitudes to learning are good overall, reflecting the school's higher aspirations for what pupils will achieve. Where teaching is purposeful and routines for learning are well established, pupils show greater independence in their learning. However, a minority of pupils still lose focus and are disruptive when tasks do not quickly engage them in learning.

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

- improve attendance by taking firm action to discourage absences for holidays in term time – satisfactory.

Quality of provision

The environment for learning has improved. Classrooms have better reading areas and display is more effective in supporting learning. The reorganisation into fewer classes has enabled the creation of dedicated spaces for small group intervention.

The new teachers have settled in well overall because of the good support and clear expectations provided by the school. The improvements in teaching and learning have been sustained and the school has adapted well to having fewer classes with a wider age range in some. Most lessons offer a variety of tasks which engage pupils and build on their prior learning. Planning has developed further and shows clearer consideration for the needs of all pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities or who speak English as an additional language. However, the quality of teaching is variable. Much is good and some is excellent, for example the Year 6 class, of widely varying ability, was skilfully challenged in a lesson about shape. Regular assessment, often involving questioning by the teacher, enabled pupils to identify and tackle mistakes and to make rapid progress. However, the progress of the Year 3/4 class was slower because learning did not consistently meet pupils' diverse needs. In a music lesson pupils spent too long in whole group discussions which did not engage all of them; some became restless and their behaviour was not well managed.

Provision for the pupils who speak English as an additional language has been strengthened. Procedures for induction now include appropriate assessment of needs with evidence of best practice, such as assessment in the mother tongue where possible. There are good plans for further developments, including welcome booklets

in a range of languages. Procedures for monitoring pupils' progress have been tightened and the outcomes are beginning to inform teachers' planning.

Provision in the Foundation Stage continues to be satisfactory. Teaching areas have been reorganised to better support learning. Phonics work, linked to a school wide emphasis on improved reading, reflects a more systematic approach by both teachers and teaching assistants. Assessment information has been improved to reflect more accurately children's attainment and track progress, but is not always referred to in sufficient detail to plan the next steps in each child's learning.

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

- ensure that in all lessons the pace of learning is quick, that behaviour is managed consistently and that work builds on what pupils of differing abilities already know – satisfactory.

Leadership and management

Recent changes in staffing and class reorganisation have tested leadership at the school, but the acting headteacher and her colleagues in positions of responsibility have responded well. The acting headteacher shows great commitment to moving the school forward, raising aspirations and building on what has been achieved. She refers, where appropriate, to the consultant headteacher but shows increasing confidence in making decisions. Subject leaders for mathematics and English play an effective role in their areas. They are less dependent on local authority (LA) personnel and the acting headteacher for support. They monitor achievement closely and are involved in developing teaching where required. The science coordinator is new in post this term. While he does not have the same strategic awareness as the leaders of mathematics and English, he has made a good start and is developing curricular planning, resources and procedures for regular assessment of the pupils' progress.

Monitoring and evaluation of pupils' achievement give a sound understanding of where improvements are required and the school development plan is adapted sensibly in response. The next steps are thought through carefully in relation to staff development at all levels. The school is working toward challenging targets and progress is carefully tracked, although milestones for the end of each term are not always clear in the plan. Monitoring of teaching is secure and clear guidance is given for improvement. The school collaborates effectively with LA personnel on key developments, but is beginning to show more capacity for independent improvement now that the staff are working as a team.

The governing body works hard to monitor the school's progress. The governors challenge where necessary and are more independent in analysing assessment information to follow up specific issues, such as progress in reading and by pupils whose first language is not English.

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

- ensure that the school improvement plan has measurable targets that relate to pupils' progress, and make better use of monitoring information to improve teaching and learning – satisfactory.

External support

Good quality support continues to be provided by the LA. There is a welcome focus on provision for pupils who speak English as an additional language, on securing leadership at the senior level, and in relation to supporting pupils and families where regular attendance is difficult. The LA is working well to help the school become less dependent on external support but is sensitive to the need for close monitoring as the substantive headship is secured.

Priorities for further improvement

- Ensure the best features of teaching and learning are evident across the school to support consistent progress by pupils.
- Ensure intervention to tackle underachievement in science receives greater emphasis.