

15 November 2007

Miss B Taylor
Hindley Green St John's Junior and Infant School
Atherton Road
Hindley Green
Wigan
Lancashire
WN2 4SD

Dear Miss Taylor

SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF HINDLEY GREEN ST JOHN'S JUNIOR AND INFANT SCHOOL

Following my visit to your school on 14 November, 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 January 2007. The monitoring inspection report is attached and the main judgements are set out below.

Progress since being subject to special measures – satisfactory.

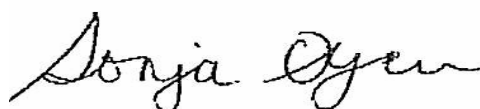
Progress since previous monitoring inspection – satisfactory.

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 diocese and the Director of Children and Young People's Services in Wigan.

Yours sincerely



Mrs Sonja Øyen
Her Majesty's Inspector

SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING OF HINDLEY GREEN ST JOHN'S JUNIOR AND INFANT SCHOOL

Report from the second monitoring inspection: 14 November 2007

Evidence

The inspector observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, subject leaders, the chair of governors and a representative from the local authority (LA).

Context

In September, two experienced teachers joined the staff and are teaching Years 2 and 6. Two teachers (1.6 full-time equivalent) are non-class based. During this inspection, the Year 3 class was taught by a temporary teacher.

Achievement and standards

There has been no significant change in pupils' achievement or standards since the last monitoring inspection. This is because the quality of teaching has not strengthened sufficiently to drive learning on and also because information from assessment is insecure. The school has gathered more information about pupils' performance but inaccuracies in teacher assessment and test data undermine the work to gauge pupils' progress and identify those who are underachieving. The tests used in October to assess pupils' levels of attainment covered aspects of the curriculum not yet taught and the results unsurprisingly indicated that many pupils had regressed or made minimal progress since May. The downward revision of some pupils' targets has not been based on an accurate picture of pupils' performance.

The children in the Reception class have made a good start in learning, particularly in personal, emotional and social development. They were engrossed in re-telling stories, copying words and having a go at writing invitations to a party, using the computer mouse to drag and drop numbers into a number line and creating symmetrical patterns with coloured pegs.

In other year groups, pupils are generally making satisfactory progress. In lessons, pupils' responses showed they were acquiring new knowledge and understandings. Good examples were the inclusion of relevant scientific terms in explanations by Year 5 pupils of why shadows vary in length throughout the day, and Year 2 pupils' knowledge of when to use a comma. A stronger focus from the adults on asking open questions is helping pupils to verbalise their thinking.

The school's scrutiny of pupils' work has highlighted weaknesses at Key Stage 2 in spelling, punctuation and sentence construction. This is compounded by some recent slips in the quality of presentation and in productivity. In some cases, there is little bar the date and WALT (we are learning to). The more able pupils are not always producing work of higher quality or greater quantity. In mathematics, there are few occasions when pupils show their workings out.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in January 2007:

- Raise standards and achievement throughout the school, especially in science and mathematics – inadequate progress.

Personal development and well-being

There was a calm, purposeful atmosphere in school. Pupils were keen to talk about what they were doing and quick to say how much they had enjoyed some lessons. They behaved well, moved around school sensibly and were generally quick to follow instructions and get themselves organised. The Reception year children were highly efficient in tidying away and getting into a circle on the carpet. The high level of concentration and engagement of the Year 6 pupils led to productive discussions about how to improve a piece of writing. The older pupils know their targets and how they relate to what they must do. Younger pupils are less sure.

Quality of provision

Although some aspects of provision have strengthened, most particularly in the consistency of marking and the work of the learning support assistants, the overall profile of teaching remains only satisfactory. The overall quality of one lesson was inadequate: pupils' learning was inconsequential as they were unsure of what they had to do and what would count as success. There was good teaching, especially for the oldest and youngest pupils, and often good elements in lessons. However, as in the first monitoring inspection, pupils' learning was not always consolidated well enough nor the challenge lifted high enough to ensure good achievement.

The detail in lesson plans ensures teachers and learning support assistants are clear about what the pupils are to learn and what the adults will do to guide them. In many lessons, the adults made good use of small whiteboards, interactive boards, cards and objects to engage the pupils. When they referred to what the pupils had already done and reminded them of where they could find information to help them, pupils were confident in carrying out the set task, used a thesaurus and checked spellings against words on display. In some lessons, the teachers were too quick to give information rather than pose questions to draw information from pupils and help them to make relevant connections. The good quality of the interactions of the learning support assistants ensured pupils succeeded in carrying out the task. Opportunities were missed, however, to draw on the adults' skills in sharing with the class what groups and individuals had achieved and in working with the more able pupils to prompt higher quality output.

There is now a high level of consistency in how teachers mark pupils' work in English and mathematics. All are following the agreed policy of giving positive comments in relation to the WALT and points for pupils to work on next. Some comments, however, are superficial and not linked tightly enough to the WILF (what I am looking for) or to pupils' personal targets. Pupils therefore have no indication of the level they are working at or when significant progress is made. Similarly, there were

relatively few indications in the target lists attached to the pupils' books and in the planners shared with parents, that curricular targets had been met.

Changes to the curriculum and timetable for this academic year reflect the staff's review of how well things worked last term when the school followed the practice in one of the partner schools. Allowing pupils into school as they arrive, and holding assembly immediately after registration, gives a smooth start to the day. Dedicated reading sessions ensure all pupils have time to read with the teacher or on their own, although in some classes, the session is too long for those who find reading difficult.

Although there is well targeted support for those pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, the school is not making the most effective use of all personnel and resources to provide timely intervention, support and extension sessions for those pupils who need boosting to achieve their best.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in January 2007:

- Improve the quality of teaching so that all pupils learn as well as they should, particularly by raising teachers' expectations of what pupils should achieve and using teaching assistants more effectively – satisfactory progress.

The following two areas for improvement were not the focus for this monitoring inspection and no judgement is made on progress:

- Provide pupils with a curriculum that fully meets their academic needs.
- Involve parents as fully as possible in supporting their children's learning.

Leadership and management

The LA, governors, headteacher and staff are aware of the need to embed and refine practices introduced in the summer term. This is reflected in the updated school improvement plan (raising attainment plan) and in the decision of the monitoring committee to meet monthly rather than fortnightly. The strategic planning cycle provides a useful structure for the work of governors and school leaders. A good aspect is the opportunity for foundation subject leaders to gain an overview of standards in their subject.

The school was jolted by the disheartening results of the performance tests administered in October but has been quick to review the situation and to discuss future practice. As a result, formats have been amended and developed to provide an overview of pupils' performance and their progress over a term, year and key stage. Senior leaders rightly recognise the need for professional development sessions to ensure that teachers can accurately assess pupils' performance. They also accept that, particularly with new staff joining the school, the time is right to reiterate for subject leaders to indicate what counts as good teaching and learning.

Subject leaders in English, mathematics and science are taking an increasingly active role in school improvement. They have used their analysis of test results and overview of information from monitoring to identify relevant priorities, including the development of problem solving in mathematics and scientific enquiry in science. They are less clear about specific aspects such as the form of question which poses

difficulty for pupils and aspects of teaching which are hindering pupils' achievement. Their subject evaluations for 2006/07 gave a good overview of what had been done, but did not identify clearly enough how effective the action had been in relation to pupils' achievement and standards. Subject action plans for this year similarly do not give specific, measurable outcomes in relation to teaching, learning and pupils' performance.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in January 2007:

- Improve monitoring and evaluation and the use of assessment data to accelerate achievement – satisfactory progress.

External support

The second evaluation report by the LA again provides the school with a detailed overview of how well exit criteria have been met and what the headteacher should do next. It also raised many valid points such as possible in-built underachievement through the revision of targets. It does not, however, evaluate the effectiveness of the support from the LA, including the contribution of personnel from partner schools. As a result, there is no indication of where the LA might now best focus its support. The evaluation officer is also the school improvement partner (SIP). The report from the SIP's first visit was not part of the school's evidence on this monitoring visit.

Management and curricular advice from LA personnel and partner schools has been beneficial in tightening systems and introducing new practices. Not all the guidance, particularly on evaluating pupils' performance, has been in the school's best interests. The school lacks reliable data on pupils' progress from the first half of this term.

Priorities for further improvement

- The accuracy of teachers' assessments of pupils' performance.
- The linking of teachers' marking to pupils' individual targets.
- The clarification of what counts as good teaching and learning.

The following priorities also remain from the first monitoring inspection.

- The pupils' learning and the identification of aspects in the teaching that promote or impede it.
- Pupils' writing and reading skills.
- The analysis of data to identify underachievement.