

13 December 2007

Mr Andrew Hurst  
Headteacher  
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Captains Clough Road  
Bolton  
Greater Manchester  
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Dear Mr Hurst

**SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF CHURCH ROAD  
PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Following my visit with Peter Jones and Christopher Griffin, Additional Inspectors, to your school on 11 and 12 December, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures in June 2007. The monitoring inspection report is attached and the main judgements are set out below.

Progress since being subject to special measures – inadequate

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 and the Director of Children's Services for Bolton.

Yours sincerely

Ruth James  
Her Majesty's Inspector

## SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING OF CHURCH ROAD PRIMARY SCHOOL

Report from the first monitoring inspection: 11 and 12 December 2007

### Evidence

Inspectors observed an assembly and lessons in all classes, examined examples of pupils' work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher and other senior staff and teachers, a group of pupils, and a representative from the local authority.

### Context

A new permanent headteacher has been appointed and will take up her post in January 2008. In the interim, the role of the executive headteacher has been extended until the end of December 2007. He continues to work 2.5 days per week at the school. A new full-time acting deputy headteacher has been seconded by the local authority since September 2007. Her post will continue until July 2008. There are also two assistant headteachers, one of whom is on a 0.6 contract. The acting deputy headteacher has held a non-teaching role since the end of October 2007. The two assistant headteachers share the teaching of one class of children from Year 3 and 4. Subject coordinators for English, mathematics and science all left at the end of the summer term 2007, one moved to a new post, one retired and one went on maternity leave. Since September 2007 these roles have been held by the deputy and assistant headteachers.

The class structure at the time of this visit included ten classes. This included two mixed year group classes, one Years 3 and 4, and one Years 5 and 6. The Year 2 class included two Year 1 pupils, and the Year 3 class included three Year 2 pupils. There are plans to change the class structure in January 2008 and create two Year 5 classes and two Year 6 classes, instead of the current arrangement with three classes.

### Achievement and standards

Standards and progress have not improved since inspection in June. The 2007 test results show that standards overall fell at both key stages when compared with the 2006 results. Results in the Key Stage 2 mathematics tests are of particular concern, with only 56% of pupils achieving the expected level or better compared to the national average of 78%. Further analysis reveals that only 6 out of 20 girls who took the test gained the expected level or better, as compared to 18 out of 23 boys. Value added measures which take account of contextual factors show a downward trend in progress. This is particularly marked in mathematics, where pupils' progress is in the bottom 2% of schools.

Evidence gathered during the monitoring visit found that the school's strategies to raise standards and progress have made no significant impact. The school has made

sure that all pupils now have termly, yearly and end-of-key stage targets but these are not yet used enough to inform planning. The school has sought to improve the ability of its staff to assess accurately the National Curriculum levels at which their pupils are performing. This has led to some improvement in the reliability of the school's assessment data in setting secure starting points for tracking progress, but this is not consistent across the school as some staff still lack the skills and knowledge to carry out this process effectively. This has implications also for the suitability of work set in lessons to meet the needs of different learners. Teachers are attempting to differentiate the work they provide, but in many lessons seen during the visit, the range of work set was too narrow or lacking in challenge.

The school is gathering data to help it monitor pupils' performance and progress, but at this stage it is short of the information it needs to do this with a degree of confidence. It has carried out tests in mathematics and has arranged for these to be marked externally. These results have not yet arrived back in school. A similar assessment in English has yet to be undertaken. The school's system for tracking pupils' progress indicates that only 19 out of 48 Year 6 pupils are currently on course to achieve their end-of-year target in mathematics. A scrutiny of pupils' work found no evidence of any significant upturn in standards or progress, with the exception of some Year 6 pupils.

The findings of the visit are concurrent with those of the very recent local authority review which did not find as much improvement in standards and progress as it would have expected or hoped for.

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

- Raise standards and improve pupils' achievement in English, mathematics and science, particularly that of more able pupils – inadequate.

### Personal development and well-being

Pupils in school say that they are happy and they feel safe. The school council says it plays a bigger part in making decisions and is excited about the planned improvements to the playground areas in the coming year. Pupils say there is no bullying or intolerance thanks to the school's successful work to bring these issues out into the open. They are appreciative of the increased opportunities the school provides to take part in a range of activities in and out of school. Many of these involve sport or physical exercise and have directly benefited pupils' health and fitness. The school has taken a strong line on behaviour and the number of pupils excluded since the inspection has risen. The school's behaviour policy is well liked by pupils, who say that good behaviour is now recognised and rewarded, and that poor behaviour has decreased as pupils understand the consequences of their actions. The school is an orderly community and most pupils behave well and show good attitudes in lessons and around the school site. Nevertheless, the behaviour of a small minority of pupils continues to present problems.

The school has made some effort to improve attendance but, as yet, this area has not been given the attention and priority it needs to really make a difference. The school's action plan is limited in its strategies. The school has tightened up its procedures for contacting parents by telephone and letter on the first day of a pupil's absence. It is also taking a firm line with parents who wish to take holidays in term time. This has resulted in a significant improvement in the level of unauthorised absence which has fallen from 1.4% in the 2006 autumn term to 0.7% this term. There has been a slight improvement in pupils' punctuality as a result of changes to the way pupils are let into school in the morning and the presence of staff in the playground to make parents and pupils more aware of the need to be punctual.

The current overall attendance level of 92.5% is exactly the same as for this period last year. It falls some way short of the target in the action plan of 95% for the year. Pursuit of absence has been impaired by the lack of an educational social worker since early November. The local authority has now identified a replacement. The school is aware that it needs to raise the profile of attendance with pupils and parents in much the same way as it has successfully highlighted behaviour. Good attendance receives an annual award but it is not yet part of the school's individual and class award system and does not feature enough in assemblies, lessons and displays. The school's newly appointed parents' champion brings experience, energy and imagination to the task of forging links between home and school but is only just beginning to carry out her role.

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

- Improve attendance so that it is at least in line with the national average – inadequate.

### Quality of provision

There has been no improvement in the quality of teaching and learning since the June inspection. Only a small proportion of teaching is good. Too much is no better than satisfactory, while concerns about inadequate teaching continue. This judgement is confirmed by observations made by inspectors, the school and representatives of the local authority. The weaknesses evident at the time of the previous inspection are still apparent. The pace of learning is too slow; the work planned does not challenge pupils of all attainments sufficiently, especially higher attaining pupils. Teachers' expectations concerning the quality and quantity of work to be done in lessons are too low. Even otherwise satisfactory lessons reveal these shortcomings to some degree. As at the time of the inspection, there is still not enough good teaching to help pupils securely regain lost ground. Efforts to increase the proportion of good teaching are only recently under way and not yet leading to improvement.

A suitable initiative is in hand to establish a more rigorous approach to the use of assessment data to support progress, but this is having little impact as yet. Although teachers' planning now aims to include different tasks for different levels of learners,

these tasks do not appropriately or consistently discriminate between pupils of all abilities. Planning does not pay enough heed to the scheduling of lesson activities, so some tasks go on too long and the attention of some children drifts. The progress in some lessons is further impeded because teachers are not consistently ensuring that pupils know what to do. This means some children are not always clear about what they are expected to do. Teachers are not adept at picking this up quickly and time is wasted. The quality of marking is mixed. The best sets out clear, next steps for improvement and recognises what has been done well, but this quality is not typical.

Many pupils are keen to answer questions in lessons and to make progress. They get on well with each other and with their teachers. During the small number of good lessons seen, the pupils worked confidently and made good progress. In a Year 6 literacy lesson the work was accurately tailored to meet the needs of different levels of ability. Most importantly, the pupils had a very clear understanding of how to make progress because the teacher had used the very good strategy of giving them a copy of the assessment criteria needed to reach their target sub-level. As one pupil rightly observed: 'We could do with this in numeracy.' The provision in the Foundation Stage remains effective and continues to help the children make a good start to their formal education.

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

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning, eradicating inadequate teaching and increasing significantly the proportion of good teaching – inadequate.

### Leadership and management

Following an uncertain period after the inspection in June, the executive headteacher continues in a part-time capacity until December 2007. The governing body has been successful in appointing an experienced headteacher from January 2008. There remains uncertainty over the post of deputy headteacher. This role is currently fulfilled by a local authority consultant on secondment until July 2008, when one of the school's own senior staff is due to return from another secondment. Governors are aware of the need to establish a permanent deputy headteacher as soon as possible. Although governors have sought to establish an appropriate structure to lead the school, the delays in establishing a permanent stable leadership team mean that progress since the school was made subject to special measures has not been rapid enough.

The executive headteacher and acting deputy headteacher have brought a degree of stability, albeit temporary, to the school's leadership since September. They have worked very hard to gain the confidence of the staff and generate momentum for change. The three key subject coordinators were all new to these roles in September 2007. All have received training and support, for example, from the school improvement adviser and local leading teachers, but at the time of the visit their work was not having a significant impact on the teaching of their subjects across the school.

Until recently, too little management attention has been given to improving the quality of teaching and learning across the school. This is related to the executive headteacher only being present for part of each week, the teaching role of the acting deputy prior to the October half term, and management time spent dealing with pupil behaviour issues. Improvement in the quality of teaching and learning across the school is necessary to bring about the rapid improvement in pupils' progress that is needed. The decision to use lead teachers' time for supporting key subject coordinators during the early part of the autumn term has meant that the individual coaching programme, aimed at improving the quality of satisfactory teaching, did not commence until late in the term. A specific management focus on inadequate teaching has led to individual support plans being put in place. Some more general staff development on teaching and learning has taken place. Observations of teachers have led to individual guidance on how to improve teaching and learning. These activities have not had sufficient impact on classroom practice. There remain too many weaknesses, even in satisfactory lessons, for pupils to make the good progress that is necessary if they are to catch up.

Problems identified with teachers inaccurate assessment of pupils' current levels, and inadequate tracking of progress, are beginning to be addressed, particularly through work carried out by the acting deputy headteacher.

Strategies to improve attendance have not been successful, although unauthorised absence has reduced. The serious behavioural problems presented by a very small minority of pupils have occupied much management time, and continue to do so.

Teaching staff absence, one factor in the school's deficit budget position, has reduced and a three-year plan to move the school to a more secure financial position has been accepted by the local authority.

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

- Improve leadership and management, including governance – inadequate.

## External support

The local authority has worked with governors and senior leaders, and a strategic project group has been established to oversee the school. The local authority' statement of action includes success criteria and a series of specific actions to address the areas for improvement raised in the inspection. Resource implications are also included. The school improvement officer has visited the school on a weekly basis and given advice and guidance on a range of matters. She has provided support to the current leadership team. The local authority arranged the secondment of the current acting deputy headteacher, a teaching and learning consultant. This fulfils a management role and provides much-needed expertise in teaching and learning. Financial support has been offered which has enabled leading teacher time from staff in other schools to be provided. Recent additional financial support has

also enabled the release of the acting deputy headteacher from a teaching role to allow more time for leadership and management duties. Links have been established with another local school to help share good practice, through teachers undertaking observations and in their turn being observed. A parents' champion has also been appointed by the local authority to help build bridges between home and school.

#### Priorities for further improvement

- Use accurate assessment data to plan teaching and learning to maximise pupils' progress.