

7 December 2007

Mrs S Finley  
Acting Headteacher  
Westhoughton Parochial C of E Primary School  
The Fairways  
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Dear Mrs Finley

**SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF WESTHOUGHTON  
PAROCHIAL C OF E PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Following my visit with Derek Aitken, Additional Inspector, to your school on 5 and 6 December 2007, 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, the Director of Children's Services for Bolton and the diocese.

Yours sincerely

Roger Gill  
Additional Inspector

## SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING OF WESTHOUGHTON PAROCHIAL C OF E PRIMARY SCHOOL

Report from the first monitoring inspection: 5–6 December 2007

### Evidence

Inspectors observed seven lessons or parts of lessons. The school's documentation was scrutinised and inspectors met with key staff, groups of pupils, the chair of governors, a diocesan governor and two representatives from the local authority (LA).

### Context

Since the school was inspected in June 2007, there have been a number of significant changes. The headteacher left in November and the deputy headteacher became acting headteacher for the rest of the autumn term. An interim headteacher has been appointed to lead the school from January until April 2008 during which time it is planned to appoint a substantive headteacher. A member of the teaching staff is on long-term sick leave. As a result, the Year 4 class is being taught by temporary teachers. A new teacher has been appointed to take the Reception class after the current postholder retires at Christmas. A project group has been established consisting of members of the LA and diocese. This body advises the school's governing body about matters relating to school improvement.

### Achievement and standards

There has been some progress in raising standards and improving achievement, but not enough yet for these to be satisfactory. Despite the provisional results at Key Stage 2 in 2007 showing that standards were a little higher than the national average, the achievement of this group of pupils was still not good enough when set against the standards they reached at the end of Year 2. Moreover, the decline in results at Year 2 in 2006 continued into 2007. Progress is not consistent across the school owing to differences in the quality of teaching. Weaker teaching invariably limits the speed at which, for example, higher-attaining pupils make adequate progress. By contrast, pupils are racing ahead in Year 6 because learning is so well suited to pupils of all abilities. A system of setting targets for pupils to achieve by the end of Year 2 and 6 has been introduced, but it is not working properly yet. This is partly because previous assessments of pupils' attainment, completed in July 2007 are not reliable enough to allow challenging, but realistic enough targets to be set.

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

- Raise standards and improve progress to at least satisfactory levels for all groups of pupils – inadequate

## Personal development and well-being

Pupils' personal development was not a key area for improvement identified in the inspection report of June 2007. Thus it was not a focus of this visit.

## Quality of provision

A satisfactory start has been made in dealing with the areas for improvement identified in June 2007. A new system of half-termly assessments was used in November for the first time, in an effort to provide sound knowledge about the effect of teaching. Throughout the school, pupils have been given short-term written targets in reading, writing and mathematics. They enjoy trying to reach these and many talk knowledgeably about how these targets apply to what they are doing in lessons. As one older pupil said in appreciation of these recent changes, 'Targets give my brain a challenge.' Moreover, teachers' marking is beginning to make comments about pupils' progress in relation to their targets or the lesson's objective.

The planning of lessons is becoming more effective because teachers are concentrating on what might be expected of the different groups of pupils. There are now different activities for higher, average- and lower-attaining pupils in English and mathematics lessons. Moreover, the deployment of adults is becoming more effective in making sure that pupils succeed in these activities. For example, teaching assistants have a well explained brief to assist specific groups of pupils, make notes on the progress made and communicate this to the teacher. For their part, teachers are beginning to use this information to annotate their plans for the next day. Thus future tasks are modified depending on how well pupils are doing on a day-to-day basis. Lessons begin with a clearly communicated message about the purpose of the activities and how teachers will know whether successful learning has taken place. This has the effect of directing pupils' attention and providing them with a means of self-evaluation.

It is too early for these initiatives to have had a marked effect on achievement over time, but purposeful lessons are improving pupils' short-term progress. There are still flaws in some lessons whereby groups working independent of an adult, for example higher attainers, do not get on quickly enough or there are not enough practical resources available for able pupils to try out new ideas for themselves. The lack of school guidance about how to teach able, talented and gifted pupils limits teachers' appreciation of these matters.

Teachers have found that working in partnership with staff from another school has helped them introduce new approaches and ideas. Personnel from the LA have fostered this link and provided other many other useful pieces of advice, which have enabled teachers to begin the necessary improvements in pupils' learning.

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

- Regularly review the progress that individuals are making through the year and take effective action when necessary - satisfactory

- Ensure that teachers use the information they hold about individuals' standards and progress to good effect when planning and teaching lessons – satisfactory

## Leadership and management

School leaders have not yet provided teachers with a clear educational direction. Despite all the good advice provided by the LA, the school still lacks a plan for improvement that is specific enough to make a difference. The existing plan is ineffective because the evaluation used to produce it does not pinpoint exactly what teachers need to do to improve pupils' learning. Lesson observations, conducted by school leaders for example, have not supplied clear guidance in this respect. Moreover, the school has not evaluated the 2007 results from Year 2 and Year 6 to furnish it with more information about what needs to be improved. There are some signs that better plans for the future are emerging. The governors have recently completed their action plan, but it has had limited impact to date. Similarly, the literacy and numeracy subject leaders have produced plans. They contain worthwhile messages, but are not yet a driving force for improvement.

A system to record pupils' attainment was established just before the inspection in June 2007, but had not been used for long enough to have made a difference. It is now the responsibility of a coordinator for assessment, who is keen to make it more effective as a tool for monitoring pupils' progress and influencing their learning. However, as it stands this tracking device is not capable of doing the job for which it was intended. Its biggest drawback is that the record sheets are held by teachers only and senior leaders do not have copies for management purposes. Thus assessment and target setting are taking place in a vacuum. Furthermore, it is hampered by inaccurate assessments in the past because teachers' evaluations were not moderated properly. The use of this system, beyond merely recording levels of attainment and setting targets for the next term, is very limited. For example, the school cannot judge which individuals, groups or classes of pupils are progressing faster or slower than the rest. This restricts the school's chances for deploying staff to work with the neediest pupils, for example.

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

- Ensure that school leaders at all levels provide clear educational direction to enable pupils to achieve as well as they can – inadequate
- Firmly establish effective systems through which to monitor and improve pupils' progress – inadequate

## External support

The LA's statement of action to support the school fulfils Ofsted's requirements. The way that personnel have been mobilised to pursue this plan has been good. The LA and diocese helped the governing body to take brisk action once the headteacher decided to leave. Teachers at Westhoughton Parochial have been paired with staff from a local school chosen because of its good practice. The headteacher of the partner school will assume the role of interim headteacher from January, thereby providing valuable continuity. Moreover, the school's development plan will be thoroughly overhauled before April 2008 because the LA justifiably judged it to be

inadequate. The school improvement partner and the LA's consultant for teaching and learning have provided effective advice about improvements needed in the quality of lessons. The LA and diocesan advisers have helped the governing body to produce their own workable action plan.

#### Priorities for further improvement

The priorities for further improvement continue to be the key issues identified at the school's inspection in June 2007.