

10 March 2008

Mr R McMurdo
Headteacher
East Ward Community Primary School
Willow Street
Bury
Lancashire
BL9 7QZ

Dear Mr McMurdo

**SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF EAST WARD
COMMUNITY PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Following my visit with Stephen Wall, Additional Inspector, to your school on 6 and 7 March 2008, 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 September 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

Newly qualified teachers may be appointed

This letter and monitoring inspection report will be posted on the Ofsted website.

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 and the Assistant Director (Learning) for Bury.

Yours sincerely

Linda Murphy
Additional Inspector

SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING OF EAST WARD COMMUNITY PRIMARY SCHOOL

Report from the fourth monitoring inspection: 6 and 7 March 2008

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with key staff, the chair of governors and a representative from the local authority (LA). Informal discussions were held with pupils in the course of lessons and break times.

Context

In January 2008, a substantive headteacher took up post and two acting assistant headteachers were appointed internally for two terms. The two part-time associate headteachers remain as consultants. One member of staff is absent long-term. One of the two additional governors has resigned.

Achievement and standards

There is still a good deal of work to do to raise standards, in particular, at Key Stage 2 in mathematics and science and in reading across the school. Nevertheless, there are indications that most groups of pupils are making headway, most strongly in writing. The progress is seen in the school's data and in the pupils' work which is presented well. Despite improvements to teaching, pupils in Year 6 have much learning to make up because of past underachievement. Analysis of data for the current Year 5 pupils demonstrates a more promising picture.

Children get off to a rapidly improving start in the Foundation Stage. Since the last inspection the outside provision has been improved. Good use is made of it to promote children's learning in a wide variety of ways. This is accelerating children's learning and preparing them better for the transfer to Year 1.

More work has been done in analysing assessments throughout the school. Clear evaluation has identified that the way pupils handle data in mathematics and science is a common thread requiring improvement. Positive action is taking place to address this shortcoming in pupils' knowledge. A concerted effort to improve pupils' use of scientific vocabulary is helping to develop pupils' knowledge in science and improve the way in which they discuss scientific investigations. The written recording of science, however, is over reliant on worksheets. Writing copied from other sources means opportunities are lost for pupils to apply their developing skills at organising their own writing. Initial work to ensure 'calculation' is taught in a consistent way across the school is taking place. This is a major need for lower attainers at Key Stage 2, in particular, where lack of quick recall of multiplication tables is slowing down their rate of calculation. Good strides have been made in developing independent writing at Key Stage 1 through concentration on using letters and sounds. It is paying off also in improving pupils' reading. The same strategy is now being used with older pupils to accelerate their acquisition of basic skills.

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

- Raise standards and achievement in English, mathematics and science across the school - satisfactory

Personal development and well-being

Pupils' personal development was not a key area for improvement identified in the inspection report of September 2006 and was not a focus of this visit. Pupils' enjoyment of school and learning continues to grow. Across the school strong relationships generally encourage good behaviour.

Quality of provision

The quality of teaching continues to improve and is encouraging pupils to be more active learners. This is especially the case in the Foundation Stage where solid foundations for pupils' skills in speaking and listening, as well as positive attitudes to learning are being laid. However, there remain inconsistencies in the quality and effectiveness of teaching overall. The greatest improvements in teaching are evident in lessons which include a wide variety of interesting activities and good use of resources such as information and communication technology. In two classes, for example, the projection of photographs accompanied by music really helped capture pupils' interest and fired their imaginations to produce creative work at a level that was at least that expected for their age. What pupils are to learn is made much clearer at the start of lessons and reflects improvements in all classes. Overall, learning support assistants are deployed well to support identified groups of pupils. Developments in the quality of marking are helping pupils gain a clearer understanding of what they need to do to improve their work. Even so, arrangements to ensure that marking is followed up sufficiently well to move pupils' learning on are inconsistent. Where learning is less effective, lessons are too slow and lack sufficient stimulation. Pupils' interest wanes and learning is not strong enough to enable pupils to progress as quickly as they should. In some lessons the reliance on one set of worksheets for all pupils means that work is too difficult for some and too easy for others.

The school's efforts to improve its use of data from assessment means that pupils have a clearer understanding of the significance of whole-class targets to support their learning. Preparation for setting individual targets has begun – the use of helpful individual target booklets is at an early stage. Pupils have breadth to their learning now through a range of activities such as celebrations on World Book Day and time set aside to focus on subjects in some depth, for example, recent projects in design and technology.

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

- Improve the quality and effectiveness of teaching, focusing on what children are learning and their rate of progress – satisfactory

Leadership and management

The recently appointed headteacher with effective support by the two associate headteachers has been quick to grasp a clear understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. This means that gains made have not on the whole been allowed to slip. Leadership continues to focus sharply on the priorities of improving standards, teaching and monitoring. Initiatives are mostly monitored closely through observations of lessons, scrutiny of pupils' work, and regular assessments which show progress in writing is stronger than in mathematics and science. Help from the LA to improve the system for tracking data is in hand. This proposed finer tuning is to support developments in holding staff to account for the progress of pupils in their class. The quality of teaching and learning continues to be checked regularly. Strengths and aspects for development are identified and acted upon increasingly rapidly. Even so, the monitoring is not yet fully revealing some of the inconsistencies in the quality of teaching and learning and, consequently, in the rate of progress of different groups of pupils.

The governing body acted positively in appointing the new headteacher. A very recent restructuring of committees has led to more refined arrangements to meet better the school's needs, although the impact of the work of the new committees is yet to be seen. Governors are involved in first-hand monitoring of the school's progress through links with classes, although inconsistencies in this process remain. Reports and presentations by staff to governors are increasingly evaluative, although they have some way to go in terms of linking outcomes more fully to the impact on pupils' progress. Whilst there is discussion between the headteacher and chair of governors, it is insufficiently formalised or regular enough to ensure that the governing body is thoroughly up to date with progress outside of the termly meetings.

Staff morale remains positive, and staff work increasingly well together. The acting assistant headteachers and team leaders are growing in their role, although monitoring of lessons by middle managers is at an early stage with training still being provided. The training is well structured and thorough. Middle managers are much more aware of their key role in leading their teams to implement agreed initiatives and enhance the quality of pupils' learning.

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

- Improve the monitoring and evaluation of the school's performance including the role of the governing body as a critical friend – satisfactory

External support

The school continues to benefit from the LA's effective support. Financial assistance together with a range of brokered professional development is beneficial in developing the skills of senior and middle managers and in regularly monitoring and evaluating the school's progress.

Priorities for further improvement

- The priorities for further development continue to be those identified at the school's inspection in September 2006.