

3 March 2008

Miss B Taylor  
Headteacher  
Hindley Green St John's Junior and Infant School  
Atherton Road  
Hindley Green  
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Lancashire  
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Dear Miss Taylor

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

Following my visit with Eileen Mulgrew HMI to your school on 28 and 29 February 2008, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the third 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.

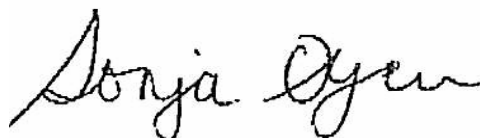
Progress since being subject to special measures – satisfactory.

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.



Mrs Sonja Øyen  
Her Majesty's Inspector

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

Report from the third monitoring inspection: 28 and 29 February 2008

### Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents including pupils' work in English, mathematics and science from all year groups, and met with the headteacher, vicar and representatives from the diocese and local authority. Inspectors talked to pupils from Years 2, 4 and 6 and heard them read.

### Context

Since the last monitoring inspection the inclusion manager has returned to work. The deputy headteacher was absent during this inspection.

### Achievement and standards

There are some positive signs that achievement and standards are on the rise. Pupils' work in their books since November and their work in lessons shows an improvement in both quality and quantity of content. In lessons, pupils generally made at least satisfactory progress because they were clear about what they had to do. The good support of the learning assistants enabled the lower attaining pupils, and those with individual needs, to meet their targets. In writing, it was evident that pupils had taken on board key features of different texts. As a result, Year 2 pupils confidently compiled definitions for a glossary related to dinosaurs, and Year 4 pupils started their explanations with questions to catch the reader's interest.

The data from recent tests gives the school its first secure overview of pupils' performance in reading, writing, mathematics and science. The profile is mixed; a small number of pupils have made really marked progress since last summer and rightly been given new targets to extend them. Most pupils are on track to meet their targets at the end of the summer term, but, in too many cases, pupils need to make, in the three half terms remaining, the progress expected over a year.

The data highlights inconsistency in pupils' progress between classes, key stages and subjects. Inspection evidence confirms the findings from the school's detailed assessments of pupils' reading which indicated disparities in progress. Pupils generally like stories and are interested in books. The Reception year pupils listened attentively to versions of 'Jack and the Beanstalk' and were able to retell the key events. Many are starting to recognise 'tricky' words. However, too many pupils at Key Stage 1 are slow to develop as independent readers. Part of this is because they look to the adult for the word, or they have a go and fail to realise that their effort does not make sense. This also typified the reading of some older pupils. The headteacher's sessions with the more able readers in Year 6 is a good step in ensuring that they fulfil their potential in coping with difficult text. While Year 6 pupils have gained a library/reading corner in their classroom, the school library has become untidy and lost its allure as a place for all to find a good book. Chances are missed in classrooms and around the school to use books as part of displays, and to

interest pupils in different authors and poets. There was little, for example, to illustrate the theme of Detective Week.

In mathematics, pupils are generally working at the level expected for their age and making satisfactory progress, although Year 3 pupils have not moved on as much as they should, and pupils' books shows that the higher attaining pupils are not always stretched enough. Pupils are developing sound skills in calculation and, as part of their written work, are beginning to include their workings out. This is an improvement since the last inspection. Similarly, in science, there has been an increase in investigative work throughout the school and in the variety of ways that pupils choose to record their findings. In discussions and in their written work, the pupils use relevant scientific terms and show a strengthening awareness of the process of predicting, gathering evidence and coming to a conclusion.

Inaccuracy and immature handwriting remain issues in writing across the curriculum. Pupils show a positive attitude to writing and try hard. The recent introduction of daily sessions to heighten pupils' awareness of the links between letters and sounds is a useful whole-school strategy to plug gaps in pupils' knowledge of spelling patterns.

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 – satisfactory.

#### Personal development and well-being

Pupils in Year 6 said they will be sad to leave in the summer because things are now so much better. They feel valued and well supported; they are pleased with what they have achieved so far and appreciate the introduction of learning mats, which make clear their targets and what to do to reach them. Pupils' pride in doing well was reflected in the smiles, interest and applause of all in the school assembly.

There is now a purposeful air in the school. Pupils generally behave very well throughout the day. Older pupils were very efficient overseeing younger ones during a wet lunchtime. Occasional boisterousness from boys out of the classroom was quickly quelled, as was the restlessness of Year 3 pupils in lessons when a new activity began. The Reception year pupils have leapt in confidence and the ability to organise themselves. In many classes, there was a noticeable improvement in the diligence and concentration of pupils but occasionally poor classroom organisation, such as having to wait for materials, stymied pupils' efforts to get on with their task.

#### Quality of provision

The quality of teaching is strengthening. There was a higher proportion of good teaching than in previous inspections and none that was less than satisfactory. The staff have acted positively on advice and shifted the focus to pupils' learning. They have successfully improved the quality of questioning, especially in science, and the frequency of their reminders to pupils about targets and how to achieve them. Teachers' expectations and confidence have lifted as a result of pupils' positive

response and, overall, the pace of learning is beginning to accelerate. As yet, however, not enough lessons move at a rapid pace in rehearsing pupils' knowledge and upping the challenge.

Teachers' meticulous planning means they are clear about what they want the pupils to learn and how the different adults are to play their part. Teamwork is strong and learning assistants are preparing their own resources to help pupils learn. The decision to give pupils more working time in lessons is boosting the amount of written work but too many pupils lose time in writing down what they have to do, and also in finding what they need. There is considerable scope to ratchet expectations higher, especially in how pupils present their work, and to share effective practice in organising rooms and resources to ensure that pupils get what they need quickly.

The school has drawn up curriculum maps giving an overview of the topics covered over the year by each class. This provides a good base to identify when concepts, knowledge and skills are introduced and revisited, and to pinpoint gaps in content. Parents are regularly informed about their children's progress, current class topics, visits and events; invitations went out to parents of Reception year children to attend the assembly when their children would receive a certificate. However, the format of the information sheets varies as does the level of detail and the quantity of ideas for parents on how they can support their children's learning. This variability, also evident in the quality of displays of pupils' work, undermines the moves to get the best out of the pupils.

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

### Leadership and management

Shared responsibility for school improvement has developed well. Members of the senior management team have shown energy, willingness and initiative in setting up systems, checking on what is happening and supporting others. A good example is the work of the English subject leader to lead meetings to moderate teachers' judgements on pupils' writing, compare data, identify gaps in pupils' performance and introduce support programmes. The focus has rightly shifted to plugging gaps in pupils' spelling and improving their handwriting with school-wide programmes. However, chances have been missed to look at pupils' work and identify common weaknesses that could be rectified quickly. Much effort and time has been invested in pupils' progress reviews. These sessions, and the accompanying detailed diagnosis of what each pupil needs to do next, are a growing strength of the school's work. The inclusion of the English and mathematics subject leaders ensures that they gain a well founded overview of class profiles.

The governing body is monitoring the school's progress, agreeing policies and also considering the school's finances and how best to meet the needs of pupils. The school is benefiting from the diocesan decision to delay the school's contribution to the costs of refurbishment after the fire. Although governors have conducted the statutory appraisal of the headteacher's performance, some of the required elements related to the performance management of the staff have not been met.

The quality of management is improving. The headteacher and key managers have monitored the work of others and given support to individuals leading to improvements in practice and a boost to self-confidence. However, some elements have slipped because the monitoring has not been tailored to check that agreed practices are being carried out. The school is better placed to track its own progress and direct its own work. Key policies, including one on teaching and learning, are now in place. The improvement plan has been amended to reflect actions taken and to indicate those delayed due to changes in staff's responsibilities. The updated school self-evaluation is an honest reflection of the current situation although some judgements are overly rosy given the variability of pupils' achievement, the quality of teaching and the limited evidence of sustained improvement.

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 – good.

#### External support

In line with the statement of action, the LA's pattern of support has changed. The partnership with another primary school has moved into a consultation phase based on the needs of St John's. Consultation between the two headteachers was helpful in drawing up the teaching and learning policy. The school has requested support from the LA to develop further aspects of science and mathematics.

The school improvement partner has worked with the school to set targets for 2009 and to review those for 2008 using the school's performance data. The report confirms the concern about the progress of the higher attaining pupils and differences between year groups also identified in the report from the LA's third evaluation visit. The evaluation report is thorough and critical while acknowledging the school's success in meeting some of the milestones. As in previous reports, it gives the headteacher a clear agenda for improvement, including the need to meet all performance management requirements. The LA has provided advice on how this may be done.

#### Priorities for further improvement

- The tailoring of monitoring to ensure that agreed practice is being followed by all and desired improvements are being made.
- The injection of urgency, drive and pace in lessons along with the provision of systems to support pupils' independence as learners.
- Raising expectations of how well pupils present their work, and of the quality of displays especially those to support current topics.