

28 February 2008

Mr Graham Burrows  
Executive Headteacher  
Westhoughton Parochial Church of England Primary School  
The Fairways  
Westhoughton  
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Dear Mr Burrows

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

Following my visit with Linda Murphy, Additional Inspector, to your school on 26 and 27 February 2008, 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 June 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 Director of Bolton Council Children's Services and the diocese.

Yours sincerely

Roger Gill  
Additional Inspector

## SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING OF WESTHOUGHTON PAROCHIAL CHURCH OF ENGLAND PRIMARY SCHOOL

Report from the second monitoring inspection: 26 and 27 February 2008

### Evidence

Inspectors observed seven lessons or parts of lessons. The school's documentation was scrutinised and inspectors met with the headteacher, members of the leadership team, class teachers, the chair of governors, and a representative from the local authority (LA) children's services.

### Context

Since January 2008 the school has been led by an interim headteacher who retired recently from the established partner school; a school that is recognised for its successful teaching. Governors plan to appoint a substantive headteacher from September 2008. A member of the teaching staff is still on long-term sick leave. As a result, a supply teacher is teaching the Year 4 class. A new teacher took over the Reception class after the previous post holder retired at Christmas. The Project Group, which advises the school's governing body about matters relating to school improvement, has invited the chair of governors to be a member.

### Achievement and standards

There has not been enough time for new initiatives to have a marked effect on pupils' progress. Consequently, progress in raising standards and improving achievement remains inadequate. Pupils in Year 6 have large gaps still in their learning, which have accumulated over a number of years. Despite improved teaching, they are a long way behind the expected level for their age, particularly in writing and mathematics. Similarly, elsewhere in the school, the pattern of satisfactory and sometimes good teaching has not yet eradicated shortcomings in pupils' learning. These exist more often in Key Stage 2 where pupils have had longer to be affected by any weaknesses in teaching. There are signs that some pupils, in addition to those in Year 6, are catching up. For example, pupils in Year 4 are beginning to make better progress. Moreover, some pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are beginning to achieve higher levels in writing because the new inclusion manager has issued clearer guidance on how these pupils should be taught.

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 development identified in the inspection report of June 2007. Thus it was not a focus of this visit.

## Quality of provision

The school's programmes of training and development are improving the quality of teaching and learning. Opportunities created by the LA for school staff to work with consultants and advanced skills teachers are beginning to pay dividends in improving lessons. Teachers are embracing a range of styles, which adds interest and challenge to the pupils' learning. For example, the promotion of discussion in pairs is increasingly well established, improving pupils' engagement in learning.

There remain large gaps in pupils' knowledge and understanding but improvements in lesson planning, due to better use of assessment information, help to match work to pupils' needs more sharply. The degree of challenge in lessons is accelerating although at times moves too rapidly for the slower learners or leaves higher attainers completing work that is too easy for them. Pockets of inconsistent practice remain, for example in the way that reading is taught, assessed and recorded. Time allocated to reading is not always planned well enough to ensure that pupils reach the highest standards of which they are capable. The deployment of teaching assistants is variable particularly at the beginning and end of lessons. At these times pupils can miss out on extra support and help. The organisation of classrooms has improved yet there are still areas that are untidy and do not set a good example for the pupils.

Improved provision in the Reception class is helping pupils to begin to take some responsibility for their learning. The activities are often well chosen to engage children's interests. Even so, the children still require much direction in their personal development to aid their choice of activity, improve their concentration and help them work well with others. Assessment of children's learning in the Foundation Stage gives a clear picture of children's attainment and now provides a more reliable baseline from which progress can be monitored. The Reception class is under-resourced. This impedes the development of pupils' independence because they do not have enough learning resources from which to choose when they are playing.

The quality of marking is improving the way pupils focus on their success and makes clearer what they need to do to improve. The higher expectations staff now have of pupils is mirrored by the increased use of learning objectives so that pupils are clearer about what they are to learn and what is expected of them.

Staff have made a start at including assessment into their everyday teaching but this is still at an early stage. Teachers are increasingly skilled at questioning pupils' understanding before moving on and using careful questioning to lead pupils towards new learning. A start has been made to trim down the pupils' individual targets in writing so they are less complex and more easily understood.

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

The executive headteacher has, in a very short time, provided the school with the clear educational direction it needed. The school development plan contains relevant and measurable tasks. The deputy headteacher and the subject leader for mathematics have produced action plans for English and mathematics which inform staff about how to go about the necessary improvements. Furthermore, guidance for teachers and assistants about pupils who find learning difficult has been overhauled and made more effective.

The quality of teaching is being checked on more regularly. As a result, teachers are receiving advice regularly about the improvements needed in their work. This has helped to bring some inadequate teaching up to a satisfactory level. However, the criteria in use are not fully explicit, particularly in the case of standards and achievement in lessons. Furthermore, some observations concentrate too heavily on teaching at the expense of its influence on pupils' learning and their progress. The monitoring of lesson planning and pupils' work has only just begun and it is too soon to judge its effect.

Another aspect of the clearer direction provided by the headteacher is the introduction of a new approach for reviewing pupils' progress. A computerised tracking system, which is being trialled in Westhoughton and its partner school, has improved teachers' understanding of how pupils are progressing. They can see now at a glance which pupils are making weak, satisfactory or good improvement. Importantly, senior leaders are now in a position to begin to track the progress of pupils regularly. Given the newness of the system, the school has not had time to analyse fully its effectiveness. However, some teachers are already beginning to use the system to set more appropriate targets.

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 – satisfactory
- Firmly establish effective systems through which to monitor and improve pupils' progress – satisfactory

### External support

The LA has continued to provide good support for the school. The LA and diocesan advisers have worked hard to develop a solid working relationship with the governing body. This has been productive in helping governors understand more about the challenges faced by the school, the improvements being made and what still needs to be done. The school's improvement adviser and LA consultant for teaching and

learning continue to provide effective advice about improvements needed in the quality of lessons.

### Priorities for further improvement

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