

25 June 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 Peter Jones, Additional Inspector, to your school on 23 and 24 June 2008, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the fifth 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 – good

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – good

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 fifth monitoring inspection: 23 and 24 June 2008

Evidence

During the visit, inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised a range of documents and examined samples of pupils' work. Discussions were held with the headteacher, the deputy headteacher designate, senior and middle leaders, a teaching assistant, groups of pupils, members of the governing body and a representative from the local authority (LA).

Context

The governing body has formed a school improvement committee to monitor the school's work. The governing body does not have a full complement and in particular lacks community and parent governors. A deputy headteacher and a newly qualified teacher have been appointed to take up post from September 2008.

Achievement and standards

Standards at Key Stage 1 are improving well. A much higher proportion of pupils are working at the expected and higher levels in reading, writing and mathematics than in 2007. At Key Stage 2, pupils' progress is accelerating as the quality of teaching improves. Despite this, pupils' attainment has not yet caught up with standards nationally at the end Key Stage 2. Standards at this key stage are proving more difficult to shift because of accumulated underachievement over a number of years. The progress of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is increasing at the same rate as that of other pupils because, although individual educational plans are often insufficiently precise, class teachers ensure that the tasks given in lessons mostly meet their needs. The achievement of the small minority of pupils learning English as an additional language is growing, as these pupils benefit from extra help and from the school's overall focus on developing pupils' speaking and listening skills.

The increased progress reflects the greater challenge given to pupils and the raised expectations by staff of what pupils can achieve. Good improvements in guiding pupils' reading and developing their understanding of letter sounds and extended opportunities to read in a range of subjects supports pupils' growing skills and enjoyment of reading. The successful implementation of a policy on calculation is improving the consistency of how numeracy is taught. This includes regular teaching of multiplication tables, which is aiding pupils' ability to respond with increasing speed and accuracy to arithmetical problems. A focus on understanding and using data to help solve scientific and mathematical problems is giving pupils increased confidence to use their growing skills and is adding to their enjoyment. In other respects the tasks in science are often too general. As a result, progress in science is not as rapid as in English and mathematics.

Children continue to achieve well in the Foundation Stage from starting points mostly well below those typically expected for their ages. Despite this good achievement, by the time they enter Year 1 their attainment is below the levels expected nationally.

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 – good

Personal development and well-being

Pupils say that school is even more enjoyable than at the time of the previous monitoring inspection. This is because they are more motivated to learn in lessons. They have better resources and more opportunities to use them. Pupils say learning is not only more informative, it is also more fun. They like the recently introduced 'good to be green' behaviour system. As a result, pupils are more motivated to learn and cooperate. Older pupils, in particular, appreciate the increase in the amount of competitive sport: their participation and success in this area has increased the confidence, pride and self-esteem of many. The school's efforts to improve attendance have helped parents and pupils become more aware of the importance of regular attendance; overall attendance since last September has risen by over 1% and is now in line with national averages.

Quality of provision

The quality of teaching has improved since the last monitoring visit. As a result of better support and monitoring there is greater consistency in the quality and effectiveness of teaching across the school. Lesson planning is sharper with clearer learning objectives, and the work of support staff is more carefully integrated into lessons to make learning more effective. Improvements can be seen in the way time is used for learning and in the willingness of pupils to take advantage of the learning opportunities given. For example, in a Year 6 registration period pupils worked enthusiastically on a variety of tasks to improve their literacy and numeracy. Lessons have better pace, and this reflects teachers' higher expectations of what their pupils can and will achieve. Occasionally, the pace is too fast for some pupils, and this curbs their progress. Teaching provides more lively and meaningful opportunities for speaking and listening in all lessons. Pupils of all abilities and backgrounds are more prepared to contribute to discussions and volunteer answers as a result. Sometimes, however, teachers' voices can be a little too strident and this has the effect of inhibiting pupils' responses. The school's improved resources are being used effectively as exemplified in the use of electronic whiteboards in most lessons to model teaching points and to convey information in a stimulating manner. Pupils' presentation of their work has improved and this aids accuracy in mathematical calculation in particular. However, standards of handwriting remain weak for many pupils by the end of Year 6. Although the match of work to individual abilities in numeracy and literacy has improved since the last visit, room for improvement remains in the level of challenge for pupils of all abilities, and in particular for the most able. These factors hinder progress. There is still too much whole-class teaching, with pupils having insufficient opportunities to develop independent

learning skills. This is because in many lessons the emphasis is on the teaching rather than on the learning outcomes for pupils.

The marking of pupils' work has seen more attention given to providing pupils with the advice they need to take the next steps in their learning. The successful introduction of individual target books gives pupils a greater focus on their learning, more involvement in their assessment and as a result they take greater pride in their achievement.

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

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

Leadership and management

Leadership is resolute and purposeful and accelerating improvement. It is based on more regular and increasingly accurate appraisal of the school's strengths and areas to develop. The information this produces is used increasingly effectively to steer improvements in teaching and learning. As a result, pupils' learning is more rapid and enjoyable than it was at the last monitoring inspection. Staff are more aware of the need to hasten pupils' progress and work well together to this end. The increasing experience of the two acting assistant headteachers is paying dividends as they lend support to the headteacher and help guide staff in implementing newly agreed arrangements such as the marking of pupils' work. Together with subject leaders for literacy, numeracy and science they play an increasingly effective role in monitoring and improving the school's work.

The revised policy for pupils with special educational needs sets a clearer way forward but is not implemented sufficiently well. The leadership of provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is underdeveloped and lacks an effective overview of the current arrangements and what is required to meet pupils' needs more effectively. As a result, other staff take on extra responsibilities to ensure that pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities progress as well as their classmates.

Governance is improving. The work of the school improvement committee, in particular, is aiding the school's recovery through a more thoroughly informed view of the school. This helps governors fulfil their role as critical friends with increasing confidence: the additional governor continues to provide good support. Links between governors and classes, presentations to governors from key staff and training in data analysis are all helping governors to check more effectively the effects of the changes on pupils' progress. Strategic planning has improved and the school has secured staffing appointments for September 2008.

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 – good

External support

The LA has a clear overview of the school and continues to be responsive to the school's needs, with the school improvement partner taking a key role in ensuring that the school receives the extra support it requires. This has recently included support to the governing body, consultancy support for English, mathematics and science and the continued beneficial support of the associate headteachers.

Priorities for further improvement

- Improve the leadership of the provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.