

02 July 2008

Catherine Fenton  
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Dear Mrs Fenton

**SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF CHURCH ROAD  
PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Following my visit with Ronald Bulman and Naila Zaffar, Additional Inspectors, and John Gornall, Ofsted Assistant Divisional Manager, to your school on 30 June and 01 July 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 June 2007. 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 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 and the Director of Education for Bolton.

Yours sincerely,

Ruth James  
H M Inspector

## SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING OF CHURCH ROAD PRIMARY SCHOOL

Report from the third monitoring inspection: 30 June and 01 July 2008

### Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher and other senior staff, a group of pupils, the chair of governors and a representative from the local authority (LA).

### Context

The new permanent headteacher has been in post since January 2008. A permanent deputy headteacher has now been appointed, together with a Foundation Stage leader and a Key Stage 2 leader. A Key Stage 1 leader will be appointed shortly. A new chair of governors has been elected and the governing body has been reconstituted. There are now no vacancies on the governing body.

### Achievement and standards

Moderated results of teacher assessments for children currently in Foundation Stage show that their skills and abilities are above age-related expectations. This is the result of the good teaching that they receive. While this good rate of progress is not matched elsewhere in the school, the overall picture is one of improvement.

In Key Stage 1, although teaching is improving, progress remains slower and standards by the end of Key Stage 1 are below average. Standards in Key Stage 2 also remain below average overall. However, school assessment evidence shows that rates of progress for most Key Stage 2 year groups have accelerated this term, and the legacy of underachievement is beginning to be addressed because of improvements in teaching. There remain gaps in pupils' knowledge and understanding, particularly in mathematics, but there is better awareness among teachers now of the need to ensure that basic skills are secure before teaching more advanced topics.

Targeted support and intervention strategies, together with good teaching, have helped to tackle weaknesses in pupils' knowledge and understanding in the current Year 6. The school's own assessments of their performance show an improvement in standards which suggests that test results will be better than in 2007.

Assessment and tracking of pupils' progress is now firmly in place and the data are being used much better to impact on classroom practice. Assessment information is routinely collected at regular intervals and analysed to show rates of progress and to identify underachievers who can then be targeted.

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

- Raise standards and improve pupils' achievement in English, mathematics and science, particularly that of the more able pupils – satisfactory.

## Personal development and well-being

The enjoyment that pupils now find in coming to school and participating in a stimulating range of activities is reflected in improved attendance figures. This significant move towards national average figures has been rapid and achieved through a series of concerted efforts on several fronts. The issue of attendance remains a school priority. It is emphasised and transmitted to pupils, parents and carers through newsletters and other regular and persistent home-school liaison. Competitions and awards reinforce the drive for good attendance on a daily and weekly basis. The educational welfare officer has been vigorous in persuading all but a minority of families of the importance of regular attendance. In extreme cases the law has been invoked, so that only a hard core of irregular attenders persists. Overall attendance is moving closer towards the national average, though it still remains below. There are some excellent examples of good attendance, approaching 100% in the case of a few classes, but the legacy of poor figures in the autumn term is keeping the year's average down. The school has taken a hard line on taking holidays in term time and envisages that this practice will reduce this year. However, it still has to overcome the adverse effect of this practice in the past, which has impaired the achievement of those pupils directly affected.

Exclusions have reduced in recent weeks, having gone through a peak, which reflected the tough stance on attitude and behaviour of the new headteacher and the governing body. There have been no permanent exclusions and fixed-term exclusions, involving only boys, are for a limited range of infractions which have much reduced as the quality of the school's provision has improved. The thoughtful deployment of additional teaching staff has helped to avert abrasive and confrontational behaviour. The school has also raised the awareness and enlisted the support of parents and carers, for example with short but decisive lunchtime exclusions. The significant change in the ethos of the school, building on its most caring and supportive aspects, has had a major impact on the improvement of attitude and behaviour. By degrees the recognition and appreciation of good behaviour and effort is supplanting the need for extreme sanctions.

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

- Improve attendance so that it is at least in line with the national average – good.

## Quality of provision

The school has made good progress since the last monitoring visit in improving the quality of teaching and learning. Subject coordinators have supplemented well the hard work of the headteacher and her deputy headteacher, so that improved teaching methods and outcomes are widespread in all key stages. Teachers have been willing to improve and have responded positively to the whole-staff training and individual guidance, coaching and monitoring provided by the school and the LA. Further opportunities to liaise with colleagues in other schools and to emulate their procedures and standards have consolidated and enriched their own practice. The

bright displays of simulating material in classrooms, including prompts, word walls and the celebration of finished work, reflect a determination to provide a supportive learning environment.

The good features observed in the Foundation Stage continue to be evident. Children get off to a good start in their learning in a positive and constructive atmosphere. The benefits in terms of progress and personal development of free and guided outdoor play mirror those generated by the busy atmosphere in classrooms. The children in Key Stage 1 now have a range of opportunities to develop their learning through play in a designated play and learn room. The room is managed by a TA who liaises with the teachers to develop play activities which link directly to the curriculum and this is furthering pupils' learning. Teaching and learning in Key Stages 1 and 2 have improved, more particularly in Key Stage 2 where over half the lessons are good. Lessons are generally well planned to provide an engaging sequence of varied activities which build more securely on previous learning and respond more closely to pupils' learning preferences. Teachers refer to these at intervals to ensure that all pupils understand what they are working towards and that they are staying included. The topics chosen, such as the life and works of the Beatles, are accurately calculated to engage pupils' enthusiasm and stimulate their own creativity. In the best lessons the objectives are clearly stated and discussed before being posted as a reminder. Teachers are getting better at adapting work to suit pupils' different abilities. They make effective use of teaching assistants who ensure that pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are making similar progress to their classmates. For this reason lessons are now moving at a faster pace and with the correct degree of challenge. When, occasionally, a minority of pupils are underemployed, this is either because their attention drifts or the tasks are insufficiently challenging to occupy their time. In most instances teachers and their assistants spot and deal effectively with such minor lapses. They smoothly refer to the school's well received and understood rewards and sanctions system.

Teachers' presentations are usually clear and often supported by imaginative use of the interactive whiteboard. Pupils enjoy coming out to drag and drop items, to illustrate points and make calculations. They use laptops purposefully and with confidence reflecting teachers' growing confidence and skill in the use of information and communication technology (ICT). Good use is being made of talking partners and group discussions. This strategy increases the amount of time that pupils spend on tasks and gives them responsibility for their own learning. Teachers and their assistants are usually mobile and attentive as they circulate briskly in class to ask additional questions or offer brief advice.

Inadequate lessons, while not completely eradicated, now comprise a very small minority. A small number of satisfactory lessons still lack pace and lustre, although even here pupils are patient and relations remain satisfactory. Teachers are always keen to discuss how they can improve and willingly take advice.

The quality and effectiveness of assessment has improved although there is some way to go before all teachers deploy the full range of assessment for learning strategies. Questioning is often penetrating and revealing, helping pupils to order

their thinking and prepare for written work. Marking in exercise books is now constructive and helps pupils to see how they can improve. There is widespread recognition of effort, ranging from brief written commendations and stickers to 'golden awards' in the headteacher's assembly. Teachers are becoming more adept at analysing accumulated data to track progress and set targets for future progress. The school has sharpened teachers' awareness of acceptable standards and has kept up a rigorous programme of monitoring calculated to ensure the continuation of improvements achieved to date.

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

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning, eradicating inadequate teaching and increasing significantly the proportion of good teaching – good.

### Leadership and management

Since the last monitoring visit the new headteacher has established a permanent leadership structure to take the school forward. One post remains to be filled. With a firm hand at the helm, staff now have more confidence in their own, and the school's, ability to move on. Leadership time is far more focused on the longer term strategic view, striving to reach the position the school should be in rather than expending too much energy on day-to-day operational matters. Nevertheless, the headteacher is a visible presence around the school, reassuring both adults and pupils of her unstinting support. Staff are growing in confidence and the improved climate for learning is reflected in the decline in reliance of teachers on the headteacher for support.

Progress on all fronts since the last monitoring visit has been significant. Together with the capable deputy headteacher and other dedicated senior staff, the headteacher has successfully fostered a culture among the staff that recognises the need for changes in practice in order to accelerate pupils' progress. There are raised expectations for pupils, in terms of their behaviour, attendance and achievement, and raised professional expectations for staff with respect to the quality of their work, the environment they create and their aspirations for pupils. Rigorous monitoring and the increased accountability of teaching staff within a supportive professional culture are in place.

Strategies to improve teaching and learning are firmly established, including specific support and coaching plans and a range of more generic training opportunities, many of which are targeted. Inadequate teaching is much reduced. Making use of her network of local colleagues, the headteacher has employed capable experienced teachers who have been seconded in to cover short-term vacancies. Their expertise is used to spread good practice and bring benefits to the whole staff, for example in developing teachers' ICT skills and the use of interactive whiteboards. Teachers are much better equipped to plan and deliver lessons that meet the full range of abilities and needs in their classes and this is reflected in the improving quality of lessons observed. There remains a way to go to achieve the rapid rates of progress that pupils need to make to regain lost ground, particularly among certain year groups,

but this is now much better recognised and closely monitored both by classroom teachers and senior staff.

The culture of accountability that now exists is reinforced by the headteacher holding regular meetings with class teachers to consider individual pupils' progress. Teachers are formally required to follow up these meetings and develop specific plans to address individual needs, especially for pupils who are not achieving as much as they could. Nevertheless, there remains work to be done to accelerate the pace of improvement further so that more of the teaching is good, particularly in Key Stage 1. A number of moves among teachers are planned, to make the best use of individual expertise and focus the best teaching where it is most needed.

Additional external funding has been sought to maintain two small Year 6 classes next year to give these pupils the best chance to catch up before they embark on their secondary education. This well conceived school and LA action plan is monitored regularly and good progress is being made in meeting key milestones. Positive evaluations of initiatives such as Year 6 interventions are increasing the confidence of school staff in their ability to make a difference in a short space of time. Strategies to improve parental involvement and improve the standing of the school in the local community continue and include a successful summer fair.

A new chair of governors has been elected, who works closely with the headteacher. She is a strong and capable leader with a very good grasp of the key issues. The governing body has been reconstituted and there are no vacancies. Together with the headteacher the chair is working with governors to encourage more active involvement, for example by linking individual governors with particular classes. There have been a number of well attended governor training events, including one to support governors in interpreting performance data. The governing body is now well placed to fulfil an effective role as a critical friend of the school.

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

- Improve leadership and management, including governance –good.

#### External support

The LA continues to provide good support to the school. The LA appointed consultant continues to work effectively to support the school. An astute and experienced education professional, he provides valuable advice on a range of matters including teaching and learning issues and leadership and management issues. He has, for example suggested ways of maximising the benefits of any external funding the school might be awarded. Other LA advisers and consultants continue to work with the school in a variety of capacities, including professional development, assisting with teachers' coaching and support plans, and monitoring. The LA continues to work with the headteacher to resolve the historic financial problems, and there is agreement on the need to maintain appropriate funding for current pupils. Human resources support is provided over staffing matters. A recent

LA review identified sensible priorities for action focused on accelerating pupils' progress.

Priorities for further improvement

There are no additional priorities for further improvement.