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20 June 2008

Mrs Eileen McBirnie  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mrs McBirnie

### SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF ST. JOHN'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

Following my visit with Mrs Jan Corlett and Mr Jim Kidd, Additional Inspectors, to your school on 18 and 19 June 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 September 2008. The monitoring inspection report is attached and the main judgements are set out below.

Progress since being subject to special measures – satisfactory

Progress since the previous monitoring visit – satisfactory

Newly qualified teachers may not 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, and the Director of Children's Services for Liverpool and the Liverpool Archdiocesan Director of Schools.

Yours sincerely

Frank Ravey  
Additional Inspector

## SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING OF ST JOHN'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

Report from the second monitoring inspection: 18 and 19 June 2008

### Evidence

Inspectors observed lessons throughout the school. Discussions were held with key staff and with pupils. Discussions also took place with the chair of the governing body, representatives from the local authority (LA), the Liverpool Archdiocese and the school improvement partner (SIP). A range of documents was examined and pupils' behaviour and attitudes were observed in and outside lessons.

### Context

Since the previous inspection, three teachers have been absent through long-term illness. At the time of the monitoring visit four out of the 12 classes in Key Stages 1 and 2 were being taught by temporary teachers. An associate headteacher has been appointed and is presently working full time in the school to support the senior leadership team.

### Achievement and standards

Standards are beginning to rise, particularly in mathematics, although in writing they remain stubbornly low. The rate of pupils' progress is improving and fewer are underachieving. Achievement in lessons in Key Stages 1 and 2 is improving. This is because teaching overall is becoming more effectively focused on meeting pupils' learning needs. Although no inadequate teaching was observed, children's achievement in the Foundation Stage is sometimes less than it should be because of weaknesses in teaching and assessment. Pupils' progress as evidenced by their work in books in Key Stages 1 and 2 is improving but the more able pupils still do not do as well as they should because they are often not set sufficiently challenging tasks to extend their learning. Work planned for these pupils is still not matched closely enough to their abilities. In contrast, the progress of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is improving, particularly as a result of recently introduced intervention strategies and more effective support in lessons. Overall, teaching is becoming stronger and this is having a positive impact on pupils' learning and progress.

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

- Raise standards and increase pupils' rates of progress in English, mathematics and science at Key Stages 1 and 2 – satisfactory

### Personal development and well-being

Pupils continue to behave well and enjoy school. They are enthusiastic learners. Relationships in lessons and throughout the school continue to be good. The school is sustaining the improvements in attendance evident at the time of the previous

monitoring inspection but still has some way to go. The work of the learning mentor has a positive impact on those children whose attendance still causes concern and initiatives such as 'Walk to School' and links with a local radio station raise the profile of attendance in the school and local community.

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

- Raise the level of attendance to at least the national average – satisfactory

### Quality of provision

The impact of teaching on pupils' learning and achievement is improving. The amount of good teaching observed during this monitoring inspection rose slightly from the previous one. In Key Stages 1 and 2 expectations of what pupils should achieve are higher. Better explanation of the lesson's focus makes pupils more aware of what they are to learn and improved lesson planning means that in the more effective lessons tasks are closely suited to pupils' learning needs. Teachers are building on the solid start made previously to improve the use of assessment in helping them match work to these needs. However, the match of work to the needs of the more able pupils is still sometimes insufficient to get these pupils learning at the pace of which they are capable. Teachers' marking is improving with the best now challenging pupils to improve. However, this good practice is not yet consistent throughout the school. The standard of presentation of work in pupils' books is improving. In the Foundation Stage children's progress is hindered when adults do not draw out the full potential for learning in the tasks children are set. In addition, weaknesses in assessment procedures in the Foundation Stage prevent staff from knowing the precise actions needed to ensure that children's learning is on track. Throughout the school, teachers continue to promote good relationships and this leads to pupils being keen to learn. Good attention is being paid to improving the learning environment in which pupils work, for example by providing displays of work that encourage them not just to look but to think and learn.

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

- Make better use of assessment information to plan work which meets the needs of pupils of all abilities and provides pupils with guidance on how to improve their work – satisfactory
- Ensure that teaching consistently enables pupils to learn well and make good progress – satisfactory

### Leadership and management

The school has taken a significant step forward by establishing clear roles and responsibilities within its senior leadership team. This has introduced a new sense of focus and purpose to its work. The associate headteacher is providing welcome support and managerial advice to the senior leadership team. Lines of communication within the senior team and the larger senior management team are clearly established and working much better. The headteacher is monitoring the

work of the senior team effectively and enabling middle managers to play a significant role in monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching and learning. A comprehensive programme of lesson observations is being undertaken although the next step of learning from the outcomes of this in order to improve practice has yet to be taken. A programme of interventions to combat underachievement is being undertaken successfully. Managers have focused less on the effectiveness of the Foundation Stage since the school was judged to require special measures and this has resulted in some weaknesses developing. A strong sense of team spirit has become evident among staff, based on a shared determination to improve provision and outcomes for pupils. It is too soon to judge the success of most initiatives in the light of these outcomes but a promising start has been made. The governing body is working with increasing effect to hold the school to account and to fulfil its statutory requirements.

Progress on the area for improvement identified by the inspection in September 2007

- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management at all levels in monitoring and evaluating the work of the school and meeting statutory requirements – satisfactory
- Clarify the roles, responsibilities and lines of communication in the school's leadership team so that it functions effectively as the driving force for school improvement – good

#### External support

The LA and school improvement partner continue to provide good support for the school. In partnership with the Archdiocese, the LA has recently appointed an associate headteacher whose expertise and advice are already proving very beneficial.

#### Priorities for further improvement

- Improve the quality of the way adults interact with children in the Foundation Stage in order to make the most of learning opportunities and raise standards.
- Improve assessment procedures in the Foundation Stage so that staff can check children's progress accurately and take any necessary action to keep their learning on track.