

11 April 2008

Mr R Peden
Acting Headteacher
Moston Fields Primary School
Brookside Road
Moston
Manchester
M40 9EN

Dear Mr Peden

**SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF MOSTON FIELDS
PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Following my visit with Sarah Drake and Peter Jones, Additional Inspectors, to your school on 9 and 10 April, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures in November 2007. The monitoring inspection report is attached and the main judgements are set out below.

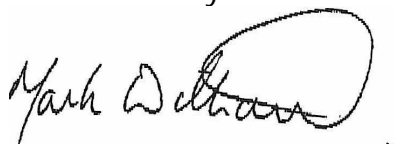
Progress since being subject to special measures – satisfactory.

Newly qualified teachers may be appointed subject to the approval of the monitoring inspector.

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 Education for Manchester

Yours sincerely



Mark Williams
Her Majesty's Inspector

Report from the first monitoring inspection: 9 and 10 April 2008

Evidence

Evidence was collected from the following sources: observations in fifteen lessons, an assembly and break-times; scrutiny of documents; meetings with the headteacher, the senior leadership team, members of staff, the chair of governors, pupils, parents and a representative of the local authority (LA).

Context

The substantive headteacher is currently not in school. An acting headteacher was appointed in December 2007. Several classes have experienced periods of staffing absences since the inspection of November 2007.

Achievement and standards

Standards, despite small improvements, remain too low. The most recent assessments conducted by the school show the percentage of pupils making improvements in reading, writing and mathematics has increased. However, as recognised by the school, this is not accelerated progress or always satisfactory progress from pupils' starting points.

Year 6 pupils are currently on course to meet their Level 4 targets in this year's national tests in English, mathematics and science. Too few, however, are expected to attain the higher Level 5. This means the overall poor rate of progress between Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 is unlikely to improve this year. There are currently no assessments in place for science. As a result, the school is unclear how well pupils are progressing in this core subject.

Pupils' work in books confirms the overall low standards, particularly in writing. Too few opportunities exist for pupils to extend their literacy and numeracy skills in other subjects. Raising attainment plans have been introduced in all year groups. While these highlight pupils who need to make three, four or even five sub-levels progress over the course of the year, it is not clear how these targets are translated into teachers' weekly lesson plans.

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

- Raise standards in English, mathematics and science in Key Stage 2 and in reading, writing and mathematics in Key Stage 1, and increase the rates of progress for all pupils – inadequate.

Personal development and well-being

This remains satisfactory. The positive features reported at the previous inspection are still evident, particularly the positive relationships that pupils form with each other and staff. During the visit, all the observed behaviour was at least satisfactory.

In the playgrounds pupils energetically let off steam and make good use of the recently bought equipment which school council members have helped to select. The councillors act as good ambassadors for their school. They are very positive about the way their ideas are taken into account and about the improvements that they have seen over recent months. They report that instances of bullying have reduced but do still occur, particularly in the boys' toilets. Attendance remains satisfactory but, by altering the start of the day, punctuality has improved.

Quality of provision

The school, through more effective leadership since December 2007 and the advice and support from the LA, has intensified its monitoring of teaching and has put into place a comprehensive programme of professional development for all staff. Training has been provided at whole-school level in key areas such as numeracy and literacy, models of quality first teaching, the criteria for a good lesson and the overall quality of teaching and learning. As a result, there is better teaching than at the time of the November 2007 inspection, with nearly half observed during this monitoring visit judged to be good. Such teaching is characterised by lively pace and high expectations of pupils' work and behaviour by staff. A range of strategies and the reward system are used to engage and motivate pupils and resources are used well, particularly computers and interactive whiteboards. There is a better sense of pupils learning together and relationships between pupils and adults are good in these lessons. There is far less reliance on worksheets. However, some inadequate teaching remains in successive year groups. There has also been some disruption to the continuity of learning in three classes because of staff absence.

In November 2007, the curriculum was judged to be satisfactory. It remains so but enhancements have been made. For example, new and more consistent timetables have been put in place, the school has reduced time slippage and assembly time is better managed. The introduction of handwriting sessions in Key Stage 1 and phonics sessions in Key Stage 2 following morning registration give the pupils a more focused and purposeful start to the day. Guiding reading sessions and phonics teaching are now established and leaders check to see they take place across the school. As yet it is too early to see the impact of these measures on pupils' achievement.

New systems to record pupil progress have been introduced and, as a result, assessment has a much higher profile in lessons and classroom displays. Pupils' progress in reading, writing and numeracy is now consistently tracked across the school, and nearly all staff are, because of the training they have received, becoming more confident at assessing pupils' work. Targets are in place for all pupils. Some are rightly very challenging in their demands for accelerated progress. These important measures are beginning to have a positive impact on standards and progress, but they are not yet sufficiently refined or embedded in the work of the school. As a result of the new marking policy, pupils are now provided with advice about the next steps in their learning; however, in many classes there is no check to see that pupils have heeded the advice given. Lesson planning has improved, highlighting, for example, what the more and less able pupils are to do. Having set some very challenging targets where some pupils need to make four or five sub-levels of progress by July 2008, leaders are aware the next steps are to ensure teachers

differentiate work for individual pupils in greater detail and that they regularly and consistently evaluate the impact of lessons to inform future plans. In the Foundation Stage, the assessment and monitoring of children's skills development has increased in rigour. More careful diagnosis of what individuals can and cannot do now leads to, for example, the grouping of children by ability and smaller group sizes in the Nursery. Records relating to hearing children read now identify those sounds that are causing difficulty rather than just the name of the book being looked at.

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

- Improve the quality of teaching across the school to increase the proportion of good and better teaching – satisfactory.
- Improve teachers' knowledge and skills in assessing pupils and using this information to plan lessons better matched to pupils abilities – satisfactory.

Leadership and management

Since his appointment in December 2007, the acting headteacher has provided good leadership and given the school a clear direction for improvement. Supported well by his developing senior leadership team, he has brought about important and necessary improvements, for example, the increase in the proportion of teaching that is good. Robust, understood systems and plans for improvement have been established, but their impact in raising standards and enhancing rates of pupils' progress is not yet evident nor have they been evaluated systematically. Overall, the senior leadership's view of the school's strengths and weaknesses is accurate and enhanced by improvements in phase and subject leadership. In English and mathematics, for example, leaders have begun to scrutinise pupils' work and conduct observations of teaching throughout the school. However, there is currently no permanent leadership in science and, as a result, no clear overview of strengths and weaknesses in this core subject.

Governance has improved. Agendas and minutes are no longer haphazard and indicate the governors' increased ability to hold the school to account and challenge underperformance. The delay in the publication of minutes is not helpful as there is the potential for key actions to be delayed or deadlines missed.

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

- Improve governance so that governors are able to hold the school to account for the standards it achieves and the rates of pupils' progress – satisfactory.
- Improve leadership and management at all levels so that the action taken is more effective and consistent in improving pupils' learning – satisfactory.

External support

The LA provides satisfactory challenge and support to the school through its officers and consultants. Its view of the school's progress since the inspection of November 2007 is accurate. Although its plans for the school's improvement are appropriate, it

recognises the original target date of December 2008 for the school to be removed from special measures was highly ambitious. Its revised date of December 2009 is more realistic.

Priorities for further improvement

- Improve the match of work to individual pupils' abilities, particularly for those who need to make the most progress in their learning.
- Put into place effective leadership for science.