

17 April 2008

Mrs M Sellers
Saighton CofE Primary School
Saighton Lane
Saighton
Chester
Cheshire
CH3 6EG

Dear Mrs Sellers

**SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF SAIGHTON CofE
PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Following my visit to your school on 15 and 16 April 2008, 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 December 2007. The monitoring inspection report is attached and the main judgements are set out below.

Progress since being subject to special measures – good

Newly qualified teachers may 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 Education for the Diocese of Chester, and the Director of Children's Services for Cheshire.

Yours sincerely

Brian Padgett
H M Inspector

SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING OF SAIGHTON CofE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Report from the first monitoring inspection: 15 and 16 April 2008

Evidence

The inspector observed the work of each teacher, scrutinised a sample of pupils' work and a range of documents, analysed data provided by the school and met with the headteacher, staff with management responsibilities, governors, parents, Year 6 pupils and representatives of the Diocese and of the local authority (LA).

Context

There have been many changes in staff since the section 5 inspection of December 2007. The substantive headteacher and a senior teacher resigned their posts at the end of the year. Another senior teacher remains on long-term sickness absence. The acting headteacher who joined the school in January was appointed as the new headteacher in March 2008. The posts of the two teachers are being covered by a temporary appointment and a supply teacher. The LA is funding extra time for the special needs coordinator (SENCo) and extra teaching assistance, temporarily, to enable the school to provide catch-up programmes for pupils who have fallen behind with their learning.

Achievement and standards

The results of the standard national tests and assessments (SATs) for the last two years have been broadly average at the end of Key Stages 1 and 2, significantly lower than in previous years. In certain respects, pupils' standards and achievement were of particular concern; for example, in 2007, no seven-year-olds were assessed as performing at the higher level (Level 3) in reading, writing or mathematics, and pupils' progress in science and mathematics in Key Stage 2 was so poor as to place the school amongst the lowest performing schools in the country. Recently introduced assessment and tracking systems indicate that, once again, pupils are in line to achieve broadly average results in the forthcoming 2008 national tests and assessments. However, the schools tracking information shows positive signs of improvement. Ten percent of seven-year-olds are predicted to reach the higher level in reading, writing and mathematics, and the decline in pupils' performance in mathematics and science in Key Stage 2 appears to have been arrested: eleven-year-olds are in line to achieve at least as well as most pupils do at the end of Key Stage 2 and perhaps better than most in mathematics.

Pupils' progress was mixed in the lessons observed. Progress was satisfactory in the two classes for older pupils, but generally unsatisfactory in the two classes for younger pupils. Some evidence was contradictory. For example, work in the pupils' exercise books indicated better progress than was observed in lessons and progress on the second day of inspection was better than during the first. Overall, progress

was satisfactory. One explanation for pupils not making better progress in the lessons observed was because, in general, they did not try hard enough, even when the quality of teaching was good. The progress of the youngest pupils is affected adversely by particular factors of accommodation: the class is situated in an area used as a thoroughfare, which is distracting for these youngest children, and the outdoor facilities for play and learning are inadequate.

The school recognises that a number of pupils have fallen behind in their work in core areas such as in reading, writing and mathematics. Decisive action has been taken to remedy the gaps in pupils' knowledge and understanding by implementing a number of 'catch-up' programmes, overseen by the SENCo and taught by teaching assistants. This is a positive development and some children have made spectacular gains, although overall it is too early to judge the impact of the new programmes.

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

- Raise standards, especially in mathematics and science, in Key Stage 2 – satisfactory
- Make sure that pupils make at least satisfactory progress, especially in Key Stage 2 – satisfactory

Personal development and well-being

Most pupils are happy at the school. Parents testify to this. Pupils behave satisfactorily. There are clear procedures for the management of inappropriate behaviour which pupils understand and to which they respond when required. However, the attitudes of pupils are not as good as they should be. There is too much inattention in class, especially amongst the older boys. Pupils themselves feel they could achieve better if there were fewer distractions from other pupils. There are minor incidents when pupils show a lack of appropriate respect, such as by not singing in assemblies or entering the headteacher's room without knocking or excusing themselves. Older pupils recognise that discipline is tightening under the new headteacher. Some find this challenging.

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

- Ensure pupils behave consistently well – satisfactory

Quality of provision

There have been significant recent improvements in several aspects of teaching. Parents have noted the school's fresh determination to improve standards, particularly in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science. Teachers are keen to improve the effectiveness of their work and approach improving their practice with enthusiasm. The most noticeable impact is in the assessment of pupils' progress and in the setting of a range of learning targets geared to pupils of different abilities. Teachers are beginning to plot pupils' progress against the expectations for their age, noting which pupils need more challenge in their work and which pupils need to catch up. Assessments are informing planning, which is increasingly geared to the stages of development of the pupils rather than simply based on what pupils

of that age normally cover. The learning for each lesson is made clear to pupils as is what the teacher is looking for that will indicate a successful outcome. Different work is planned for groups of pupils of different abilities. Teaching assistants are deployed effectively, although their developing skills should be used more widely to meet better the challenge of teaching pupils of different ages in the one class. All in all, much of the teaching is in line with modern practice and significantly better than that described in the inspection report of December 2007. Even so, the quality of teaching observed was not consistently good, and, occasionally, demonstrated inadequate aspects of subject knowledge and a poor match of work to ability. In the class for the youngest pupils, the school does not yet provide a sufficiently distinctive Foundation Stage curriculum for children in their Reception year.

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

- Improve the levels of challenge and support for pupils in lessons so that pupils achieve as well as they can – good

Leadership and management

It is in the area of leadership and management that most impact can be seen. All those involved in the school recognise the progress that has been made and the increased momentum for change. The school's fundamental values have been retained; Saighton remains a welcoming primary school with a family ethos and high levels of care for its pupils. Its Christian mission is being reinforced; for example, through assemblies with a strong denominational character, and increasing demands are being made on pupils through higher expectations of their academic and personal development.

The school is uniting behind the new headteacher. Staff, in particular, are increasingly confident and take a more prominent role in leading subjects and aspects of the school's work, underpinned by the newly introduced systems of tracking pupils' progress, target-setting and planning. There is much yet to do and all has to be consolidated but it is fair to recognise what has been already achieved, not least in 'root and branch' audit and rationalisation of resources for teaching and learning.

The governing body has been strengthened and has clear plans for training and for closer involvement in the work of the school. With the LA it moved quickly to appoint a permanent headteacher and begin the process of forging a new and improved future for the school.

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

- Improve the quality of leadership and management so that it ensures all groups of pupils achieve at least satisfactorily – good
- Implement rigorous systems to track pupils' progress and to analyse test data, in order to set appropriate targets and use these to raise achievement – good

External support

The statement of action meets requirements and the LA has provided good support for the school. The school's adviser works closely with the headteacher and has provided good continuity and links. The LA recognised the deterioration in the school's performance before the inspection of December 2007 and had already identified it as a school causing concern when it was placed in special measures. Subsequently, it has provided effective and timely support to the governing body and to the new headteacher and responded positively to the requests for increased resources required to start and sustain the improvement process. This can be seen most clearly in the provision of funding for extra teaching assistance, to ensure pupils who have fallen behind catch up quickly. It has well proven and rigorous systems to evaluate the progress the school makes.

Priorities for further improvement

- Improve the attitude of pupils to learning, especially the older pupils.
- Ensure the distinctive requirements of children in the Foundation Stage of learning are fully met.