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Sabden Primary School
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Dear Mrs Dundon

SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF SABDEN PRIMARY SCHOOL

Following my visit with Jim Bennetts, Additional Inspector to your school on 1 and 2 May 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 – satisfactory

Newly qualified teachers may not be appointed.

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 Lancashire local authority (LA).

Yours sincerely

David Byrne
Additional Inspector

SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING OF SABDEN PRIMARY SCHOOL

Report from the first monitoring inspection: 1 and 2 May 2008

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher and senior staff, groups of pupils, the chair of governors, and representatives from the LA.

Context

The Foundation Stage is currently being taught by two temporary teachers, following the departure of the previous part-time staff. The headteacher is retiring at the end of the current term.

Achievement and standards

Although progress in the school is currently satisfactory, there is still a legacy of underachievement which means that the school still requires special measures. Children's progress has picked up in the Foundation Stage since the previous inspection. In Key Stages 1 and 2, new systems for assessing and tracking pupils are starting to benefit pupils' learning. It is too soon, however to ensure that more able pupils and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve well enough. Girls tend to do better than boys and progress in writing is behind that of reading.

Personal development and well-being

Pupils are keen to learn but this quality is not fully exploited to get the best learning in lessons. They get on very well together and with their teachers and take a pride in their work. Behaviour in lessons is never less than good and many older pupils show a real enthusiasm and eagerness to contribute. Pupils feel that school is a safe and enjoyable place to be; they attend well. They have a good knowledge and understanding of the choices required for keeping fit and eating healthy. They relish the variety of enrichment activities within school that have a social and cultural dimension, such as the recent residential visit for older pupils and the visit by Tanzanian pupils. They have contributed staunchly to productions and rightly feel that music opportunities in the school are 'fantastic'. Pupils' loyalty to the school and their positive attitudes are a major resource for improving the school's effectiveness.

Quality of provision

The quality of teaching and learning is currently satisfactory but needs strengthening further to overcome the legacy of past weaknesses. There are variations across the school which reduces the consistency of pupils' learning. In the Nursery and Reception classes, improvements in teaching are currently underway as a result of the close involvement in the school of the LA. Expectations have been raised for children to make their own choices and to acquire a good knowledge and understanding of basic sounds and letters and mathematical understanding. The re-

organisation of resources and use of space are having a positive impact on the children's learning although there is still more to do to make the best use of outdoor learning.

In Key Stages 1 and 2, the needs of the most able, and those who find learning difficult, are not consistently met. This is because although teachers know their pupils, planning on paper is often basic, and the link between assessment and curriculum planning is underdeveloped. Good guidance from an advanced skills teacher is beginning to improve the quality of planning and to make more efficient deployment of support staff. In all classes the pace can be slow which holds back the progress of some pupils because they lose interest and are not challenged enough. The contribution to learning of specialist teachers, for example in music, dance and physical education (PE), successfully enrich pupils' learning and raise standards. Improvements to assessment are underway but pupils are not yet involved enough in assessing their own learning.

There have been marked improvements in the organisation of the curriculum for the Foundation Stage. With recent changes, well planned activities engender a productive learning environment for young children; they are now thriving well and getting off to a good start. In Key Stages 1 and 2 all statutory requirements are met and pupils also benefit from access to Spanish. The school is in the process of improving links between subjects to enable pupils to apply their basic skills of literacy, numeracy and information communication technology to new and challenging situations. Creative arrangements for staffing the curriculum, for example, in music, dance, drama, PE and Spanish, augment the day-to-day classroom provision.

Pupils' pastoral needs are well catered for. Staff are vigilant in ensuring that the school is a safe and a happy place. Whilst staff are aware of pupils' learning needs in broad terms, catering for those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and for the most able is not yet systematic. The role of classroom support staff is not well defined in relation to such provision. The tracking of pupils' progress is improving the school's ability to identify and target pupils who could do better.

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

- Improve the planning of the curriculum and of the teaching to provide appropriate challenge for all pupils – satisfactory.
- Improve assessment systems and make more effective and consistent use of them to track and analyse pupils' progress – satisfactory.

Leadership and management

The school leaders have responded positively to the findings of the previous inspection. There is an acceptance that academic achievement must improve and more attention is being given to raising progress and achievement. Under the guidance of the LA, a realistic action plan has been devised which is guiding improvement. The provision for children in the Foundation Stage has made great strides and in other parts of the school more effective use is being made of

assessment to identify strengths and weaknesses in provision. Procedures for evaluating the school are being strengthened although targets for improvement in the school development plan are rather generic and lack clear criteria for monitoring the progress. The governing body is playing its part in supporting the action plan but is not informed enough about the progress and achievement of pupils across the school. At this early stage after the previous inspection, improvements in achievement are not yet registering on the school's performance data but inspection evidence indicates that the rate of pupils' progress is improving. Given the current level of support by the LA and the commitment of staff and governors to raise achievement across the school, there is a satisfactory capacity to improve.

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

- Focus the work of leaders and managers on improving pupils' progress and achievement – satisfactory.
- Monitor the work of the school more closely and use information from information to plan for further improvement – satisfactory.

External support

The school has received good support from the LA. The response to the inspection has been swift and decisive. The work of consultants and LA officers has effectively complemented the school's drive for improvement. Momentum is picking up within the school. The statement of action produced by the LA takes full account of the areas for development identified in the previous inspection. It includes a range of suitable actions for dealing with the school's weaknesses and has a realistic time scale for intervention and for checks on improvement. The review has a clear picture of what the school needs to do with guidance on how to get there.

Priorities for further improvement

- Ensure that the needs of more able pupils and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are consistently provided for.
- Use assessment more effectively to remove underachievement and to include help pupils in setting targets for their own improvement.
- Strengthen the procedures for monitoring the school's performance.