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10 December 2008

Miss Lynne Mullen  
Headteacher  
Bruche Community Primary School  
Seymour Drive  
Padgate  
Warrington  
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WA1 3TT

Dear Miss Mullen

### SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF BRUCHE COMMUNITY PRIMARY SCHOOL

Following my visit with Ronald Bulman and Gordon Alston, Additional Inspectors, to your school on 8 and 9 December 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 September 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 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 Warrington.

Yours sincerely

Marguerite McCloy  
H M Inspector

## SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF BRUCHE COMMUNITY PRIMARY SCHOOL

Report from the third monitoring inspection: 8 and 9 December 2008

### Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher and members of staff, the chair of governors, groups of pupils, the school improvement partner (SIP) and a representative from the local authority (LA).

### Context

Since the second monitoring inspection, the governors have appointed a new deputy headteacher who will take up his position in January 2009. Staffing restructuring plans were implemented due to a reduction in the number of pupils on roll. As a result of this and some staff movement to different or promoted posts elsewhere, six teachers left the school at the end of the summer term. Following rigorous recruitment and selection procedures, the school appointed four newly qualified teachers who joined the staff in September, three of these to Key Stage 2 classes.

### Achievement and standards

Assessments at the end of Key Stage 1 in 2008 showed that Year 2 pupils reached standards that were generally above the national average for seven-year-olds in reading, writing and mathematics. The proportion of more able pupils who achieved the higher Level 3 was just below average in writing and mathematics, and above average in reading. These assessments represented improved progress since 2007. However, at the end of Key Stage 2 the proportion of 11-year-olds achieving the nationally expected level remained below average in English and mathematics, despite a small rise since 2007. A much lower than average proportion of pupils reached the higher Level 5, particularly in English.

The close monitoring of standards by the headteacher supports the school's view that locally agreed targets for the proportion of 11-year-olds attaining expected levels in 2009 and 2010 are likely to be exceeded. The school fully recognises that more pupils are capable of achieving the higher level, and continues to take rigorous action to improve the attainment of the most able pupils in the current Year 6. However, due to the legacy of underachievement in the past, this is a particularly difficult challenge. There remains much to do to bring about a significant increase in achievement at the higher level in 2009, particularly in English.

Inspectors' analysis of Year 6 pupils' work shows that school assessments are mostly accurate and pupils are given clear guidance on what is expected of them and how they can improve, particularly in writing. As a result of a recent LA review, the school agrees that there is a need for teachers to make use of appropriate writing support

materials to enable them to challenge pupils further. The school is also adjusting its emphasis to improve strategies for the teaching, rather than merely testing, of pupils' spelling skills.

A recent 'Standards in Calculating' day identified that too many pupils have gaps in their knowledge of strategies for calculating. As a result, the school reviewed its action plans for mathematics and ensured that more opportunities are provided for direct teaching of calculation skills across Key Stage 2.

Work in pupils' books now shows evidence of better, differentiated tasks appropriate to the needs of all groups of pupils, including higher-attainers and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Teachers' marking is usually detailed and they make more effective use of their knowledge of pupils' prior attainment to inform lesson planning and provide useful guidance for pupils to improve their work.

Progress on the area for improvement since the inspection in September 2007:

- Improve standards and achievement in English and mathematics – satisfactory
- Improve the use of assessment and target setting – satisfactory

#### Personal development and well-being

Pupils' enthusiasm and response to opportunities for personal development continue to be a positive feature of the school. Pupil numbers have been affected by the change of partnership at secondary level due to the planned closure of the nearby high school. However, pupils and their parents show loyalty and support to the school, the headteacher and all staff, whether long-serving or newly appointed. Parents use the time at the start and end of the school day to meet the teaching staff and exchange information about their children. Pupils are responding well to the higher expectations of their behaviour and standards of work. They enjoy carrying out a range of responsibilities from expressing their opinions through the school council to helping out with important jobs as school prefects.

Pupils are courteous and considerate and this is particularly evident at the start of school lunchtime, which is run entirely by midday supervisors. Children enjoy a range of well supervised, enjoyable activities at playtimes and lunchtime. They look after one another and make sure that everyone is included in the games and social activities. Pupils are attentive in lessons and respond well to teachers' questions. They enjoy working independently and appreciate occasional interventions in their discussions or writing tasks. Pupils, whether gifted and talented or those who find learning difficult, benefit from being withdrawn from the larger classes to receive particular attention in smaller groups. The same topics are covered in these groups but presented in simpler or more challenging ways.

## Quality of provision

The quality of teaching and learning continues on an upward trend which has not been disrupted by the staffing changes and new appointment, which augers well for the school's future development. New teachers have brought new skills and ideas, experienced staff are supporting them well, and all are learning from each other. Inspectors' judgements are closely matched to those of the school's monitoring records which demonstrate that the number of lessons judged good or better is increasing. Good teaching was seen in all key stages.

In satisfactory lessons teachers' expectations of pupils are not as high as they could be, particularly for the more able pupils. The overall pace of the lesson and the level of challenge for all pupils does not result in good enough learning to accelerate pupils' progress. In the best lessons teachers capture pupils' interests well by planning a good range of interesting tasks and practical activities, and give pupils an opportunity to discuss their ideas with each other. Teaching assistants are well briefed and show initiative to intervene appropriately and make an effective contribution to pupils' engagement and learning. Significant improvements to curriculum planning for literacy and numeracy ensure that there is a clear structure and focus to learning in these lessons. Pupils behave well and show good attitudes to learning. They say that lessons have improved and they enjoy school much more because of this. Pupils are aware of targets for learning and know how they are to achieve these. The marking of pupils' work, especially literacy, shows improvement as a result of effective staff development in this area.

The school has rightly focused on improving the core skills of literacy and numeracy. However, the learning experiences provided are sometimes unimaginative. Consequently, curriculum provision is to be reviewed in order to develop pupils' creativity fully and to make learning more relevant to pupils' lives. Subject planning is also being adjusted to enable the development of the skills of literacy, numeracy, and information and communication technology (ICT) in all subjects. Better links between subjects have been identified to promote pupils' learning.

The introduction of theme days such as 'Heroes and heroines' and 'International Languages' has been much enjoyed and appreciated by pupils. An increase in visits and visitors and after-school clubs is also adding to pupils' enthusiasm for learning. These are very recent initiatives and it is too soon to measure the impact on pupils' progress. A curriculum action plan is in place which suitably outlines further developments for the spring term 2009.

Progress on the area for improvement since the inspection in September 2007:

- Improve the quality of teaching and learning – good

## Leadership and management

The second monitoring inspection noted the positive impact of the new headteacher's leadership and this is now even more evident. The headteacher is a strong and effective leader who has successfully raised expectations of what staff and pupils are capable of achieving, while also raising staff morale and teamwork. The senior leadership team as a whole is strengthened by the improved skills of key staff. They make an effective contribution to the school's knowledge and identification of its strengths and areas for improvement, and to development planning. The quality and accuracy of monitoring and evaluation are developing well. The school's recently updated self-evaluation document has a clear focus on showing evidence of the impact of the school's actions on improving outcomes for pupils.

Newly qualified teachers have made a positive start to their career and appreciate the quality of the school's mentoring and support arrangements. These have been rightly focused on in-school activities and sharing of best practice. The senior team will be at full complement in January and the school is anticipating increased flexibility to allow for a wider range of professional development activities. This will enable closer involvement in appropriate LA training opportunities for staff at all levels.

The newly appointed deputy headteacher, who takes up his post in January 2009, is already familiar with the school through his role as the associate deputy for part of the last academic year. The deputy headteacher is to take on curriculum management as part of his leadership responsibilities. This will provide an overview of curriculum provision and look to develop a 'creative curriculum' based on themes of study across subjects.

Governors are well informed and involved in monitoring the school's progress. They are more knowledgeable about using test and assessment information to find out how well the school is doing and what questions need to be asked. New members have added to the governing body's good balance of skills and experience. Governors challenge the school and hold leaders to account. They are now looking to work with the school to celebrate and build upon its improving image in the community.

Progress on the area for improvement since the inspection in September 2007:

- Improve leadership at all levels in the school – good

## External support

The LA checks on the school's progress in the key issues for improvement and reports back to the monitoring committee. LA consultants have carried out a review of progress in literacy and as a result have planned a training session for staff to develop their use of recommended writing support materials. The LA also carried out

a review of mathematical calculation strategies across the school, and has monitored developments in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). The SIP has met with the headteacher to review the school's targets for 2009 and 2010, as the accuracy of these has been affected by significant changes in the numbers of pupils in Year 5 and Year 6 classes.

LA advisers supported the headteacher and governors in the recruitment and selection of newly qualified teachers, who are also offered a range of in-school support and external training and development opportunities.

#### Priorities for further improvement

The school should continue its work on the four priorities identified in the September 2007 inspection, the first of which was adjusted following the second monitoring visit.

- Improve standards and achievement in English and mathematics, particularly in the proportion of pupils who are capable of reaching the highest levels.
- Further develop assessment and target-setting systems so that they are used consistently across the school and contribute to raising standards.
- Build on improvements being made to the quality of teaching and learning so that a higher proportion of lessons are good or better.
- Further develop the skills of middle leaders to monitor, evaluate and improve their areas of responsibility.