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5th December 2008

Mrs Lisa Titchiner  
Headteacher  
Sabden Primary School  
Whalley Road  
Sabden  
Clitheroe  
Lancashire  
BB7 9DZ

Dear Mrs Titchiner

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Sabden Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 3 and 4 December 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 December 2007. The monitoring inspection report is attached and the main judgements are set out below.

Progress since being subject to special measures – satisfactory

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – satisfactory

Newly qualified teachers - may not 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 and the chair of governors and the Director of Children's Services for Lancashire.

Yours sincerely

Dave Byrne  
Additional Inspector

Special measures: monitoring of Sabden Primary School

Report from the second monitoring inspection on 3-4 December 2008

## Evidence

The inspector observed the school's work, scrutinised documents including samples of pupils' work and met with the acting headteacher, key staff, pupils, governors and a representative from the local authority (LA). Each class was observed to evaluate the quality of teaching and learning. The pupils' attitudes and behaviour in lessons and around school were also observed.

## Context

In September 2008 an acting headteacher took over the leadership of the school. There are currently two temporary teachers in post. A permanent appointment has been made with effect from January 2009. Since the last inspection, a member of staff from within the school has taken up a management post for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Changes have occurred in the membership of the governing body but there are currently four vacancies.

## Achievement and standards

While progress in lessons is improving as a result of better teaching and developments in the curriculum, there is still more to be done to remove the underachievement of a significant number of pupils. In 2008, provisional results in the national assessments and tests for pupils in Years 2 and 6 remained broadly average but this still represents underachievement in respect of their starting points. Unvalidated data for the end of Key Stage 1 pupils indicates that standards fell last year when compared to 2007. Standards were above average in reading and broadly average in mathematics but in writing they remained below average. Given the good levels with which pupils start Year 1, pupils' achievement in Key Stage 1 is unsatisfactory. End of Key Stage 2 results in 2008 improved slightly. Every pupil gained the standard expected for their age of level 4 in English, mathematics and science. Weaknesses still exist in writing with no pupil exceeding the national standard. The performance of boys continues to lag behind that of girls.

Children's achievement in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) has continued to improve. EYFS staff are now planning work based on much more accurate assessments. This enables them to provide well matched and suitable activities and as a result, progress in learning is accelerating. After starting school with skills that are usually above those typical for their age, children make satisfactory progress. By the start of Year 1, the large majority of children exceed expectations for their age.

In Key Stages 1 and 2, effective strategies have been introduced to raise standards; progress in lessons has increased. In Key Stage 1, improvements in standards have been held back by uncertainties in staffing but these have recently been resolved.

The quality of teaching in Key Stage 1 now enables pupils to make good progress in lessons. In Key Stage 2, staff are encouraging pupils to improve their writing and much better use of assessment is increasingly giving pupils a clearer picture of what they need to do to improve. For some pupils however, writing remains a struggle. The presentation of pupils' work, including handwriting, is an area that remains an area of particular weakness. Improved provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities means that their progress is accelerating. The provision for more able pupils has made slight improvement but these pupils are still underachieving.

Progress since the last visit on the area for improvement:

- Ensure that the needs of the more able pupils and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are consistently provided for - satisfactory.

### Personal development and well-being

Pupils' behaviour and attitudes remain a strength of the school and are increasingly being harnessed to improve learning. Pupils continue to behave safely and are aware of the choices required to stay fit and healthy. They remain loyal to the school and attendance continues to be well above average. Pupils are responding positively to increased expectations to take on more responsibility. In lessons, however, many pupils lack the confidence to learn independently, often seeking the reassurance of staff before making decisions for themselves. This holds back the learning of some pupils, in particular the more able. In other aspects of school life, pupils willingly take responsibility. Older pupils in Key Stage 2 willingly act as monitors helping others in class. They act maturely as play leaders, watching out for younger ones and helping them at different times in the day. Pupils in upper Key Stage 2 are developing a good understanding of their learning targets but this is not yet fully embedded in all classes. Pupils talk with pride about their involvement in the school council. It enables them to influence some of the decisions made by the headteacher and staff and gives pupils a good knowledge and understanding of the process of democracy.

### Quality of provision

Since the last monitoring visit, teaching has improved. The support of the LA, coupled with strong leadership by the acting headteacher has enabled the school to address weaker aspects of teaching. Accurate assessment is increasingly effectively being used to diagnose pupils' strengths and weaknesses and helping them to build on the former and overcome the latter. This has improved the quality of planning so that activities are ever more closely tailored to individual needs. The quality of provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is much improved but there is still too much teaching which does not fully engage the interests and promote the progress of the most able. Despite recent improvements, expectations are still too low for these pupils to be encouraged to think and act independently. The quality of teaching in Key Stage 1 has improved. Expectations are higher and

basic skills such as handwriting and presentation of work are increasingly well promoted. Pupils are being given greater responsibility for organising themselves and the way they learn. Much better planning, based on accurate assessments of pupils' abilities has led to the individual needs of pupils being better met. The role of teaching assistants has been strengthened. Time spent performing menial tasks for pupils who are quite capable of doing them for themselves, has been reduced. In Key Stage 2, pupils are being expected to work harder, while keeping learning enjoyable. Teachers are giving more thought as to how to reduce the gender gap in standards by looking more closely at the different ways in which boys' and girls' interests are captivated. A good start has been made in Years 5 and 6 to involve pupils in setting targets for their own improvement. This is contributing to an increase in the pace of learning of older pupils and is set to be developed further across the school. Much better use is being made of homework to extend learning and involve parents in their children's education. The quality of marking and its contribution to raising standards is getting better, but is not yet consistently used in all classes.

The school is effectively improving its curriculum. Initiatives such as introducing an author to pupils and making educational visits to places such as museums are making learning more enjoyable. The school is refining plans to link subjects together so that pupils can see that what they learn in one subject can contribute to learning in others. The strengths of the curriculum noted at the last visit remain in terms of good enrichment through studies in music, physical education and Spanish.

EYFS provision continues to improve. The use of the accommodation has been overhauled, resources increased, in particular for reading, the quality of planning improved and accurate assessments introduced. As a result expectations are now higher. Activities are made increasingly relevant to the needs of each child and more activities are being planned to captivate the attention of boys as well as girls. Children are increasingly expected to act and learn much more independently. Their good skills of speaking and relatively advanced knowledge and understanding of the world are now recognised. Activities are planned in order to build on these good starting points. More still needs to be done to balance adult led activities with those that involve choice by children, but good progress is occurring in getting this right.

Progress since the last visit on the area for improvement:

- Use assessment more effectively to remove underachievement and to help pupils in setting targets for their own improvement - satisfactory

#### Leadership and management

The acting head teacher has secured significant improvements since the last monitoring visit. The culture of the school is changing. There is a much stronger recognition that pupils' academic achievement is as important as their personal development and well-being. Higher expectations are made of teachers and pupils. Whilst progress in lessons is improving, many of the changes occurring in the school

are too recent to transfer into significant improvements in statutory assessment results.

The school has developed an accurate picture of its strengths and weaknesses. This is due to the care taken by the acting headteacher to evaluate the school's effectiveness, coupled with an improvement in systems for monitoring performance. Assessment is now an integral part of the way the school. It is used to evaluate the effectiveness of teaching, to monitor the progress of individual pupils and to monitor the school's performance. Information from assessment is used to set targets for the school's improvement and to give a clear picture of whether its actions are being successful. The acting headteacher has listened to the views of pupils, staff and parents and taken good steps to improve the quality of communication amongst staff and with parents. The appointment of an inclusion manager has made significant improvements to the quality of provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

The governing body is in a state of transition. It recognises that pupils' academic achievement should be better, given the good standards with which they bring to school. Its role in monitoring the school's performance is satisfactory and improving. It welcomes the support of the LA and the guidance of the headteacher. Given the current circumstances, the school is moving forward and is well placed to continue to do so.

Progress since the last visit on the area for improvement:

- Strengthen the procedures for monitoring the school's performance – good

External support

The LA monitoring and intervention team (MIT) provides good support. It acted swiftly to respond to the departure of the previous headteacher in July 2008. A summative evaluation group with LA, school and governor representation has been established to monitor the school's progress. It has worked with the acting headteacher and Governing Body in its efforts to raise achievement to the levels of which pupils are capable. The school has benefited from the work of consultants to strengthen aspects of teaching and learning in literacy and numeracy. The school improvement partner continues to closely monitor the school's rate of progress, with accurate and regular reviews. The LA has brokered links with two schools judged to be outstanding. These are benefiting the acting headteacher and staff in its efforts to improve the school. An advanced skills teacher is working closely with the school in developing better ways of planning the curriculum. The LA regularly reviews the timescale set for the school's removal from special measures and currently feels its original target is still reasonable.

Additional priorities for further improvement

- Raise standards at Key Stage 1 and in writing across the school.

- Improve teaching so that the more able pupils are better catered for and expectations are raised for pupils to become independent learners.
- Secure future improvements by establishing a stable staff team.