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23 October 2008

Mr David Potts  
Headteacher  
Crab Lane Primary School  
Crab Lane  
Higher Blackley  
Manchester M9 8NB

Dear Mr Potts

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Crab Lane Primary School

Following my visit with Gordon Alston and Denise Shields, Additional Inspectors, to your school on 21 and 22 October 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 April 2008. The monitoring inspection report is attached and the main judgements are set out below.

Progress since being subject to special measures inadequate.

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 Director of Children's Services for Manchester.

Yours sincerely

John Coleman

H M Inspector

## Special measures: monitoring of Crab Lane Primary School

Report from the first monitoring inspection on 21 and 22 October 2008

### Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, members of the school's senior leadership team, pupils and the chair of governors. Discussions were held with a representative from the local authority (LA).

### Context

Since the last inspection there has been considerable staff absence and consequently a high proportion of new and temporary teachers have been appointed. The LA established an action plan of support for the school. Proposals by the LA to introduce an Interim Executive Board (IEB), to strengthen the strategic governance and leadership of the school, have yet to be implemented. A decision on this is expected imminently. In September the governing body elected a new chair and vice chair. The school was allocated a new LA school effectiveness officer in June 2008. Since September an Associate Deputy Headteacher is working two days per week alongside the senior leadership team. There are also four LA consultants providing support to the school focused upon improving pupils' progress, especially in English and mathematics, and developing the quality of teaching and learning.

### Achievement and standards

The standards reached by pupils in Year 2 as shown by the national assessments of 2008 indicate an overall improvement and a rising trend. However, pupils' attainment remains below average and for the higher attaining pupils the percentage reaching the higher Level 3 is well below national expectations. The school's own assessment information shows that the progress made by this cohort of Year 2 pupils is below the expectations and targets that were set for them by the school. In Key Stage 2, provisional results of national tests in 2008 show that the percentage attaining the expected Level 4 is the highest for many years at the school though still below the national average overall. The number of pupils gaining the higher Level 5 is well below average. A significant proportion of pupils did not make the expected amount of progress especially in writing. The school does not have up-to-date assessments of pupils' progress for the autumn term 2008 because plans to analyse these are in place for later in the term. Observations of pupils' written work in literacy and numeracy by inspectors show that the rate of progress is improving, especially in Year 6 where consistent good quality teaching is having a direct impact on pupils' learning. However, although the rate of progress pupils make is increasing, it remains too variable between classes and subjects and is inadequate overall.

Progress since the last visit on the area for improvement:

- Raise standards and eradicate underachievement in all subjects –inadequate.

## Quality of provision

The quality of teaching and learning is improving overall but the rate of progress is too slow in some classes. The school's monitoring records demonstrate that the proportion of inadequate lessons is reducing and that the number of lessons judged good or better is increasing. Inspection evidence shows that there remains an unacceptably high proportion of lessons which do not ensure that pupils learn at a fast enough rate. There is not enough good teaching. Inadequate teaching is evident in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) and Key Stage 2. Teaching in the Year 6 classes is consistently good, especially in English and mathematics where pupils make good progress. Significant improvements to curriculum planning for literacy and numeracy means that there is now a clear structure and focus to learning in these lessons. In the best lessons teachers capture pupils' interests well by using interesting tasks and practical activities, and give pupils an opportunity to discuss their ideas with each other. Pupils behave well and show good attitudes to learning. They say that lessons have improved and they enjoy school much more because of this. There are significant variations in the quality of the lessons pupils receive and in the weaker lessons expectations of pupils are too low. Pupils are aware of targets for their learning but are not fully sure of how they are to achieve these. The marking of pupils' work, especially literacy, shows improvements as a result of effective staff development in this area.

A review has been made of the school's curriculum plans for the autumn term. Better links between subjects have been identified to promote pupils' learning. This is a very recent initiative and it is too soon to measure the impact on pupils' progress. A curriculum action plan is in place which suitably outlines further reviews in the coming months. As a result of the effective work to improve curriculum planning in literacy and numeracy, the provision to promote pupils' learning of basic skills is far better than previously. However, there is no identified staff member whose role is to provide an overview of curriculum provision. As a result, the school is unable to demonstrate securely that the proportion of time available for each subject ensures appropriate breadth, balance and emphasis. The curriculum provision for the EYFS does not fully meet the statutory requirements.

The school has for some time monitored pupils' attainment and has recorded this thoroughly. There is a large amount of data available but the format and use of assessment information is inconsistent. Consequently, staff responsible for evaluating the amount of progress made by pupils are unsure about the preferred information to be measured or what constitutes good progress. The school has advanced plans to install a consistent whole-school system for this in literacy and numeracy.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- Improve the consistency and quality of teaching and learning – inadequate.
- Ensure that the curriculum meets the needs of all learners and effectively develops pupils' basic skills – satisfactory.

- Ensure that the quality of academic guidance is robust enough to ensure that all pupils know how well they are doing and how they need to improve – satisfactory.

### Leadership and management

The headteacher has successfully maintained staff morale through a period of instability and change. There is a shared commitment to school improvement and a willingness to embrace new initiatives and fresh ideas. The strategic effectiveness of the governing body is limited by the uncertainty surrounding the proposal for an IEB. Consequently, in the first few weeks after the last inspection little progress was made in this regard. The governing body reconvened in September 2008 and guided by a new chair and vice chair has put in place a suitable range of committees to discharge its function. Aided by support in the autumn term from LA consultants and the associate deputy headteacher, curriculum leaders in literacy and numeracy are having an increasingly positive impact on improving the quality of teaching and learning and accelerating pupils' progress. Together curriculum leaders have monitored lessons, pupils' work and teachers' planning. Following staff training these leaders have reviewed curriculum planning and improved the structure and guidance for teachers. It is very early in the development of these middle leaders' roles but the current progress is encouraging. Immediately following the last inspection the leadership of the school lacked sufficient rigour and urgency and the pace of improvement was initially too slow. Hindered by staff changes, uncertainty around the governing body and without immediate LA support, there was a lack of direction and progress. More recently the rate of improvement has picked up but overall progress since the last inspection is inadequate.

Progress since the last visit on the area for improvement:

- Ensure that the actions leaders take have a significant impact on improving the performance of the school – inadequate.

### External support

The LA action plan successfully targets support for the school matched to the issues raised at the last inspection. The implementation of the plan was slow to begin and until the arrival of the new school effectiveness officer no actions were implemented. Additionally, some important intentions are still unrealised. Proposals to implement an IEB are not yet met and communication about this with the school and governors is poor. Intended mentor support for the headteacher is similarly not in place. Since September 2008 an associate deputy headteacher has been instrumental in bringing about improvements in the school's provision for literacy and numeracy. Consultants are providing valuable support and are helping to build the leadership's capacity to improve the school.

### Priorities for further improvement

- Ensure that the learning and development needs of children in the EYFS are fully met.