

Tribal Group
1-4 Portland
Square
Bristol
BS2 8RR
T 0845 123 6001
F 0845 123 6002

T 08456 40 40 40
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk



4 November 2008

Mr E McMorrow
The Headteacher
St Gregory's Catholic Primary School
Grange Road
Northampton
Northamptonshire
NN3 2BD

Dear Mr McMorrow

Special measures: monitoring inspection of St Gregory's Catholic Primary School

Following my visit Mick Saunders, Additional Inspector, 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 March 2008. 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 be appointed to the school in all year groups except in Years 3 and 4.

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 Northamptonshire and the Chief Education Officer for the Catholic Diocese of Northampton.

Yours sincerely

Hazel Callaghan
Additional Inspector

Special measures: monitoring of St Gregory's Catholic 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, three members of the governing body, the deputy headteacher, other members of the senior leadership team, and the mathematics coordinator. Discussions were also had with pupils and representatives from the local authority (LA).

Context

Since the previous inspection there have been several changes in the teaching staff and a new chair of the governing body has been elected. There is an increasing proportion of pupils from minority ethnic groups who are new to learning English.

Achievement and standards

As at the previous inspection, pupils were seen to be making good progress in the Foundation Stage classes and in Key Stage 1. Results in the 2008 national tests show standards have risen in Key Stage 2. Attainment in Year 6 was broadly average in both mathematics and English, but pupils' achievement through Key Stage 2 remains inadequate. Standards and progress in science remain inadequate as they were in 2007 because this has not been a focus of the school's attention. School tracking data shows that pupils in Years 5 and 6 made good progress last year, especially in English, but it was not sufficient to overcome the inadequate progress made when pupils were in Years 3 and 4. School data shows that current progress in Years 3 and 4 has now improved. This is confirmed by inspection evidence. The school has correctly identified that standards and progress in writing are areas for improvement, especially for boys in Years 3 to 6. Teachers have started to focus on this aspect of pupils' work, but there is no clear strategic plan to address this weakness for all teachers to follow. Concerns about the rates of progress made by more able pupils in the previous report are being tackled in some classes, but this is not yet consistent across the school. The increasing number of pupils with English as an additional language are supported effectively especially those who have Polish as their home language.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in March 2008:

- raise achievement and standards in Key Stage 2, particularly in Years 3 and 4 – satisfactory progress

Personal development and well-being

The last report indicated the many strong features of pupils' personal development. These remain clearly evident. Children know how to keep safe, and they know they are well looked after by their teachers and other adults in the school. The school's Christian ethos is important in promoting well founded values. As a result, pupils are considerate, kind, and well behaved. They enjoy school and attendance is good. A number of pupils are very much involved in school life as prefects, members of the school council, or, as classroom and library helpers. Some pupils said that they would appreciate more opportunity to be more directly involved in contributing to the school community. Standards and progress remain below those expected for pupils' ages and abilities, but their skills as learners are improving so preparation for the next stage of education is now satisfactory.

Quality of provision

Positive strategies to support teachers have been used effectively especially in Years 3 and 4 and there is greater consistency in promoting pupils' learning. Less experienced teachers have been paired with those who can give support and guidance. A leading teacher in the school also provides strong support, and there is an increasing proportion of good teaching across the school. All teachers ensure pupils understand the purpose of the lesson and the expected outcomes are discussed so that pupils understand how to succeed in their tasks. Assessment of pupils' work is used more effectively to ensure that activities are well matched to their knowledge and abilities but, whereas pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well supported, the higher attaining pupils are not provided with sufficient challenge in some classes.

Since the last inspection, the school day has been extended and the curriculum revised so that statutory requirements are met. For example, pupils now receive the recommended amount of physical education, and have daily lessons to develop their skills in English and mathematics, which was not always the case in the past. Pupils' standards and progress in science remain a significant weakness and the school recognises that aspects of experimentation in order to strength pupils' knowledge and skills remain an area of the curriculum that needs improvement if children are to do as well as they can. Pupils appreciate the range of clubs and activities provided by the school. These successfully extend pupils' opportunities to develop their learning and interests and pupils take advantage of them in substantial numbers. Provision for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) is good and the close partnership with parents forms a strong start to children's education.

Pupils' pastoral care is a good as it was at the previous inspection. Children know they are well looked after. They trust their teachers and appreciate the quality of care they receive. There was no specific key issue for improvement within the previous report but two concerns were raised. Concerns over aspects of health and

safety have now been satisfactorily addressed. Inconsistencies in the way teachers use assessment to plan their lessons and inform pupils how to improve their work, are being tackled. Teachers' marking is now effective in pointing the pupils to ways in which they can improve, and nearly all pupils knew the levels at which they were working. Pupils' personal targets are used well by some teachers to help pupils recognise the next steps in their learning, but monitoring of these targets is still inconsistent. The quality of feedback to pupils on their progress remains a weakness.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in March 2008:

- improve the quality of teaching by ensuring that it is consistently good, to increase the rate of pupils' progress throughout the school – satisfactory
- review the timings of the school day and the curriculum so sufficient time is allocated to meet statutory requirements and the needs of all pupils – satisfactory.

Leadership and management

The school has developed a satisfactory improvement plan in response to the concerns reported in the previous report. Comprehensive procedures have been introduced to monitor the pupils' standards and progress and to improve the quality of teaching. Data is used well to analyse individual pupils' progress and to identify those who are likely to underachieve. This information is effectively used to lead discussions between members of the senior leadership team and class teachers about how their pupils are achieving so that appropriate interventions can be planned. This is building a clear commitment to raising standards, and has already had an impact on the quality of teaching and the rate of pupils' progress. Although systems for monitoring the school's work have improved, the quality of self-evaluation and, in particular, measuring the impact of action taken to tackle the issues raised at the last inspection remain a weakness. The school has not yet allocated teaching and learning responsibility posts and the management structure does not ensure there is systematic and rigorous self-review.

Governors have created a satisfactory action plan to address the criticism of the governing body in the previous report. They now have a good understanding of their roles and responsibilities. Under the leadership of the new chair of governors, there is a clear commitment to supporting the school's improvement and to monitoring its progress. Governors are better informed and prepared to ask challenging questions, but they are also not yet evaluating the effectiveness of the school's actions. Without this thorough self-evaluation by senior staff and governors the school does not yet have the capacity for sustained improvement.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in March 2008:

- improve the quality of monitoring and evaluation, ensuring that whole school strategies are implemented fully and evaluated carefully to check their effectiveness – inadequate.

External support

The local authority has provided good levels of support for the school at many levels. Advisory support and training has been given to teachers on the new literacy and numeracy strategies and on developing more effective strategies to improve teaching and learning generally. Strategies for making lessons more effective, in using assessment data to inform planning and to support pupils' understanding of how to improve their work, can be clearly seen in action. The school management team has been supported in its role of developing more consistent procedures of monitoring the work of the school. The governing body has been well supported in its resolve to be more effective in monitoring the school. The LA support and guidance has enabled the school to understand how to improve and, although a little slow to start, this support has been instrumental in the overall satisfactory progress towards addressing the issues for improvement from the previous inspection.

Priorities for further improvement

- Develop systematic procedures for evaluating the work of the school especially about those strategies for improvement which have been introduced so that a clear view of strengths and weaknesses is gained and priorities for further improvement are identified. These conclusions should be shared with all staff and governors so there is a collective understanding of the school's progress.