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4 December 2008

Mrs Gillian Coffey
Executive Headteacher
St Teresa's Catholic Primary School
Montacute Road
Morden
SM4 6RL

Dear Mrs Coffey

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

Following my visit with Anastasia Savva, Additional Inspector, and Susan Gadd, HMI to your school on 26 and 27 November 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 October 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 be appointed subject to the following qualifications: agreement with the monitoring HMI

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 Archdiocese of Southwark and the Head of School Improvement for Merton.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Elisabeth Linley', is written over a light grey rectangular background.

Elisabeth Linley
H M Inspector

Special measures: monitoring of St Teresa's Catholic Primary School

Report from the third monitoring inspection on 26 and 27 November 2008

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and pupils' work and met with the executive headteacher, acting headteacher, members of the senior leadership team and other members of staff. They also met with groups of pupils, the chair of governors, the chair of the governors' finance committee and a representative from the local authority.

Context

September 2008 saw a significant change in staffing at the school. As a result of teachers leaving school for a variety of personal and professional reasons, plus the creation of a new post in the nursery, seven teachers joined the staff. Of these, a newly qualified teacher was appointed and one teacher joined the school on long-term supply. At half term in October, another member of the teaching staff left and a supply teacher now fills this post. Other appointments include additional teaching assistants. As a result of this, all classes now have a teaching assistant working alongside the class teacher. The senior leadership team, newly operational from September, includes team leaders of Key Stage 1 and of lower and upper Key Stage 2. In addition, an assistant headteacher has been appointed who has taken on the role of science coordinator and acting deputy headteacher. Together with the acting headteacher, they manage the school when the executive headteacher is not on site; she is in school for two days a week.

Pupil numbers have remained stable. There are currently 439 pupils on roll and this number is set to increase in January and again at Easter when more children are admitted into the Early Years Foundation Stage. Work on the school environment has taken place and improvements have been made to the playground and to the interior of the school building with the creation of additional workspaces and storage areas.

Achievement and standards

Since the last monitoring visit, pupils who were in Years 2 and 6 during the summer term completed national assessments and tests. The outcome of the assessments in Year 2 showed that standards in reading, writing and mathematics had improved since the previous year. Unvalidated data from the Year 6 tests showed that improvements had been made in English, particularly at the higher levels. A decline from 2007 was seen in the mathematics and science results; however, it should be noted that the starting points of pupils in the 2008 Year 6 group were not as high as for those Year 6 pupils in 2007. This outcome represents an improvement in the progress that pupils have made since the school's inspection. However, this picture of improvement is not consistent throughout the school. It is particularly an issue where teaching is not as effective as it should be. As a result, in some classes pupils do not achieve as well as they should. Also, pupils who are more able are still not

consistently challenged to do their best and make the progress they should because the tasks they are given in lessons are not challenging enough. Improvements in science are beginning to be seen. This is due to the improved leadership and management of the subject and the high-quality modelling of lessons by the coordinator. As a result of an improved approach to the teaching of science, pupils are now enjoying science lessons and say that the investigations they do are practical and fun. However, the quality of science teaching is yet to be assured throughout school. As a result, the progress pupils make in the subject remains inconsistent.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- raise standards in English and science and ensure greater consistency in standards in mathematics by matching work more closely to pupils' needs and challenging able pupils more effectively so that they make better progress – satisfactory

Personal development and well-being

Pupils speak positively about their school and the many things that have changed since the inspection. For example, they say that they have seen an improvement in the reduction of bullying in the playground. One child said, 'Since friendship fortnight, it has got so much better and we have hardly any bullying anymore.' They particularly appreciate the opportunity to attend lunchtime 'drop in' sessions when they can share any concerns they have with a member of staff. Members of the school council have risen to the challenge of taking on greater responsibility in school. They are particularly proud of their involvement in raising funds towards the new facilities in the playground. They are very pleased with the playground and say that, as a result of the recent work that has been completed, everyone now has something they can do. They talk with pride about how they recycle the things they use and how they keep their school tidy. It is no surprise that the school has recently been awarded the International Eco award. Pupils enjoy coming to school and this is reflected in their attendance, which continues to improve.

Quality of provision

Given the significant change of teaching staff at the beginning of the school year, much emphasis has been placed on staff induction. A good example of where this has been successful is in the induction provided for the newly qualified teacher. Effective induction, mentoring, support and access to training are valued and are making a positive difference. Training is rightly high on the school's agenda. This is particularly an issue in respect of improving the knowledge and understanding of teachers to assess their pupils' work accurately. This training is planned but has yet to take place. Senior leaders are aware of the high importance of training in this respect, given the need to ensure the security of the school's tracking of pupils' progress, which is itself in the developmental stages.

Most teachers are using better strategies to engage pupils and promote learning in lessons. For example, where good teaching in a mathematics lesson was seen, the school's focus to promote pupils' thinking, by expecting them to explain clearly the

reasoning behind their answers, was evident. Marking of pupils' work is improving and there are more examples of evaluative comments in books so that pupils are helped to improve their work. However, this is not consistent throughout the school and in some classes work remains unmarked. Although the school correctly recognises that there has been an improvement in the proportion of good teaching in school, inadequacies remain. Where inadequate teaching is evident, the pace of lessons is not good enough, the use of time is not well thought out, and on some occasions assessment for learning strategies, such as 'talking partners', is used so often that it disrupts the flow of the lesson and time for learning is lost. Behaviour management can also be an issue and, as a result, low-level misbehaviour disrupts pupils' learning and the progress that they make. Pupils' work is now much better displayed in school. In most classrooms and corridors there is evidence of what pupils can achieve and this celebrates the school's ongoing improvement effectively.

Provision for those pupils who have learning difficulties, or who are learning English as a second language, is developing steadily. A feature of the improvement made is the opportunity for staff to meet a local authority consultant in a 'drop in' session in school when they can discuss any particular issue about which they have a concern. Withdrawal groups continue to provide focused teaching opportunities and, as all classes now have a teaching assistant, additional planned support is given where it is most needed. In an excellent science lesson, strategies to increase the understanding of those pupils who have English as a second language were used well and this aided their achievement. However, in other lessons, while the planning showed the teachers' expectations and the pupils' specific language needs, the challenge and support specific to their needs and abilities were not always provided.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- improve the quality of support for pupils with learning difficulties and pupils who are learning English so that they make more sustained progress – satisfactory
- raise the quality of teaching so that a much greater proportion is good – satisfactory

Leadership and management

The executive headteacher continues to provide an excellent strategic lead for the school's development. She is correct in her evaluation of the school's needs, the priorities for improvement to raise standards and the action required to be successful in this respect. She is ably supported in the day-to-day management of the school by the acting headteacher and the acting deputy headteacher. The new senior leadership team have positively embraced their respective roles as team leaders to provide support for other members of staff. A particular example of where improvement has been made since the last monitoring visit is in the leadership and management of science. In a short time, much work has been done to facilitate better teaching, learning and tracking of pupils' progress. While recognising this achievement, the school also recognises the work that remains to be done, for example, in the monitoring of teaching and learning in science to ensure consistency of practice and

pupils' achievement. Similarly, the school knows that middle managers require further development to ensure that they are confident to lead and manage their subjects effectively. For example, in mathematics and English, this is necessary to secure the improvement needed to raise standards based on secure data and the analysis of this data by group and class as required. The opportunity to be involved in the 'Keys to Success' programme that has arisen through the London City Challenge is set to underpin work to be completed to develop middle managers further. The opportunities to share good practice are continuing and this is being modelled where appropriate in school. Opportunities to share the good practice seen in the Early Years Foundation Stage are also available to contribute to pupils' achievement in Year 1.

The governing body continues to develop and to offer an effective balance of challenge and support as required. Committee structures are in place through which governors keep abreast of the progress that the school is making. Four new parent governors have joined who provide a useful perspective on the parental view of the school. The very supportive parent–teacher association has recently raised a significant amount of money that has paid for playground developments all of which are much appreciated by the pupils. Communication between the school, governors and parents is much improved and is valued by those concerned, as shown in the recent parent survey.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- improve the quality of leadership and management by establishing better links with governors and parents and setting the right priorities for improvement that will raise standards – good

External support

The local authority continues to provide well-focused support for the school's development. This is represented by the work of advanced skills teachers, local authority consultants and the school improvement partner. An important factor in the local authority's contribution is recognising where the strengths of their work lie, for example in one-to-one support provided for teachers and where improvements can be made. There is recognition that the time is now right to provide whole-school training to ensure maximum impact, particularly given the number of staff who are new to the school. This evaluation underpins the effective partnership that the local authority has forged with the school. Another significant factor in the school's continued development is the very high-quality drive for improvement led by the executive headteacher who is a National Leader of Education.

Priorities for further improvement

- Ensure the security of teacher assessments in English, mathematics and science so that tracking of pupils' progress and the analysis of data gathered is rigorous and, most importantly, accurate.