

11 December 2008

Mr Richard Chipchase  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mr Chipchase

**SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING INSPECTION OF ST PAUL'S CE  
PRIMARY SCHOOL**

Following my visit with Marie Cordey, Additional Inspector, to your school on 9 and 10 December, 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 June 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 only be appointed with the agreement of the lead inspector.

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 Diocese of Manchester and the Director of Children's Services for Salford.

Yours sincerely

Steve Isherwood

H M Inspector

## SPECIAL MEASURES: MONITORING OF ST PAUL'S CE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Report from the first monitoring inspection: 9-10 December 2008

### Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, senior managers, a group of pupils, a member of the governing body and a representative of the local authority (LA).

### Context

The deputy headteacher at the time of the last inspection has resigned. The school is seeking to appoint a permanent replacement as soon as possible.

### Achievement and standards

Pupils' current work, together with the school's own assessment information, suggests that more pupils are making better progress than previously, although this is not yet reflected in overall standards. This is because the school is taking a range of appropriate steps to improve achievement, which in turn are leading to improvements in classroom practice. Teachers are more confident in pinpointing in their planning what pupils will learn and in conveying that message routinely at the beginning of lessons. There are clearer expectations of the progress pupils should make: regular reviews of how well pupils are achieving are to commence shortly. Staff are beginning to take greater responsibility for their classroom practice and are held to account. Although not yet consistent in all classes, teachers have a better understanding of using assessments to judge what pupils can do and what they need to learn next. As a result, the legacy of underachievement is being tackled more effectively; the school is better placed to judge how well pupils are achieving and plan appropriate support.

Nevertheless, standards for the higher achieving pupils are not yet high enough. This is because the level of challenge in some lessons is variable. This results in pupils not always achieving as well or as rapidly as they should.

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

- Raise standards, particularly in literacy and the foundation subjects to make sure that pupils make better progress – satisfactory

## Personal development and well-being

Pupils' personal development is satisfactory. This is because of the link between the quality of teaching and the standard of pupils' behaviour in some lessons. In activities where pupils are motivated by their work and the way it is presented to them, they respond enthusiastically, show positive attitudes to their learning and work hard. However, poor behaviour tends to result from lessons which fail to challenge or motivate pupils to achieve. When activities are over-directed and less engaging, allowing insufficient time for thinking and discussion, pupils' interest wanes and restlessness ensues. Attitudes to learning are much stronger when teachers make activities interesting and encourage pupils to work independently and make decisions.

When asked to express their views on the school, many commented on their disappointment about the high number of days when their lessons are taught by staff who are unfamiliar to them, when their teachers are absent or on training courses. In addition, others expressed their concern about the unfairness of situations where the poor behaviour of a minority results in all the class losing their privileges.

## Quality of provision

The quality of teaching and learning has improved. The lessons observed were at least satisfactory and the number of good lessons has increased. As a result pupils, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are making better progress in their work and are generally more involved and engaged in their learning. In the best lessons, pupils are encouraged to test and deepen their understanding with carefully crafted activities that promote high levels of discussion and independent thinking. For example, pupils in Year 2 were able to share their ideas with others when discussing a problem with one of the lights on Santa's sleigh. In contrast, pupils in Year 1 had fun in talking about the most precious gift they could give to a loved one.

Nevertheless, while some teaching has a number of strengths, these are not present in all lessons. Opportunities for pupils to think and make decisions about how they learn or to think of different ways to tackle their work are not always encouraged. In lessons where teachers talk for too long, pupils become restless and are too reliant on the teacher. At times, the range of teaching styles is too narrow and classroom management becomes ineffective when the teacher talks above the pupil or when pupils speak at once. Some pupils are not sure of how to improve their work and reach the next level. Day-to-day marking is sometimes not detailed enough to enable pupils to make the next steps in their learning.

Although, teachers display improved confidence in planning activities, the use of assessments to match work to the needs of all pupils is inconsistently applied. This

means that there is a variation in the challenge for pupils, particularly for the highest attainers. As one pupil commented, 'Some work is easy; we can do it, then we don't have to do anything else.'

The breadth and balance of the curriculum has improved. For example, resources for information and computer technology (ICT) have been developed well in all classes and have led to improvements in pupils' keyboard skills and their ability to research subjects in greater detail by appropriate use of the internet. Elsewhere across the school, pupils' literacy skills are improving because an increased focus on the development of speaking and listening skills is ensuring that their writing is more varied and meaningful. This is reflected in more detailed lesson planning emphasising the acquisition of reading and writing skills across all subjects.

To encourage a range of exciting and first-hand experiences that bring learning to life, school leaders have taken steps to monitor more closely the breadth and balance of the curriculum, including foundation subjects. Consequently, some subjects have a higher profile than previously and pupils appreciate the increased diversity of their learning. For example, pupils in Year 6 were excited by their historical research of World War Two and the plight of evacuees. However, the school recognises that the development of pupils' geographical skills is at a very early stage and there is more to be done to ensure that the curriculum effectively and consistently meets the needs of all pupils, particularly the more able.

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

- Improve the quality of teaching so that it engages pupils better and increases their enjoyment of learning - satisfactory
- Ensure the curriculum is developed to provide greater breadth and balance and to meet the needs of all learners - satisfactory

## Leadership and management

The headteacher is providing a clear steer for improvement and has generated a strong momentum for change to get the school back on track. Efforts have been clearly focused on raising achievement and in improving the quality of teaching and learning. The ability of the leadership team to undertake this work has been enhanced because monitoring and evaluation procedures have been strengthened and there is greater acceptance of the collective responsibility for driving the work to raise standards. A suitable improvement plan has been prepared, although in some areas further quantifiable targets and milestones would make the evaluation of progress more robust. Nevertheless, monitoring records demonstrate that senior leaders have an increasingly secure grasp of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Staff report that morale has improved and there is clear agreement that now is the time to pull together in the best interests of the pupils. As a result, teachers and support staff are more confident about their work and have a better understanding

of what is expected of them. The role of subject leaders is developing with training and support. For example, teachers with responsibility for literacy and numeracy have improved their skills in making judgements on how well pupils are achieving by checking more closely in pupils' books. However, the school is correct in recognising that recent improvements in this area need to go further.

Governors are deepening their knowledge of the school's performance through regular reports and through the impact of recent training. They are very committed and are becoming increasingly confident in their role as improvement partners by asking questions and seeking advice.

Senior staff and governors are putting the concerns of the past behind them. They remain forthright in their desire to see all pupils at St Paul's achieve their true potential. While taking pride in recent improvements and setting the school on the right path, they recognise that much further work is still required.

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

- Improve leadership and management at all levels to ensure that both provision and learning are at least good throughout the school – satisfactory

### External support

The LA is providing an appropriate level of support to the school, coordinated well by the school's adviser. The LA's statement of action matches the school's improvement plan and includes elements of support and challenge for all areas of improvement. The LA is committed to developing the skills of managers at all levels to enable them to monitor the quality of provision and use the outcomes of this to inform strategies for further improvement.

### Priorities for further improvement

- Accelerate the progress for higher attaining pupils
- Increase the proportion of good and better lessons
- Extend the range of teaching styles to stimulate pupils' greater involvement in learning.