

PROTECT-INSPECTION

CfBT Inspection Services
Suite 22
West Lancs Investment Centre
Maple View
Skelmersdale
WN8 9TG

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

Direct T 01695 566 934
Direct F 01695 729 320
gtunncliffe@cfbt.com



27 February 2009

Mr Simon Bramwell
Headteacher
SS Simon and Jude Church of England Primary School
Newport Road
Great Lever
Bolton
BL3 2DT

Dear Mr Bramwell

Special measures: monitoring inspection of SS Simon and Jude Church of England Primary School

Following my visit with Michelle Ravey and Kath Halifax, Additional Inspectors, to your school on 25 and 26 February 2009, 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 April 2008. 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.

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 Bolton.

Yours sincerely

Linda Murphy
Additional Inspector



Special measures: monitoring of SS Simon and Jude Church of England Primary School

Report from the second monitoring inspection on 25 and 26 February 2009

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work and scrutinised a range of documents. Discussions took place with the headteacher, other key staff, pupils, the chair of governors and two representatives from the local authority.

Context

There have been several staffing changes since the previous monitoring inspection. At senior level these include a seconded teacher who has taken the post of acting deputy headteacher for three days each week while the permanent postholder takes maternity leave. One deputy headteacher is absent. One teacher has very recently returned to fill the post of temporary assistant headteacher. An increasing number of pupils are joining the school from Eastern Europe. Most of these pupils are learning English as an additional language and have not previously attended school.

Achievement and standards

Pupils' achievement is improving. The school's tracking system shows that pupils are mostly making better progress in relation to last term although there remains some inconsistency in the pace of progress between classes and year groups, linked to the quality of teaching. Improvement is due to better use of assessment, the effective extra support to boost the progress of targeted groups and generally improved teaching. It is in science at Key Stage 2 that gains in pupils' achievement are most evident. This is because pupils have increasing opportunities to apply their scientific knowledge in practical situations. However, gaps in mathematical understanding, including methods of calculation, continue to hold back pupils' progress in numeracy. A new policy for teaching calculation has not yet had time to impact positively on standards. Improvements to the teaching of reading, including teaching letter sounds, are laying stronger foundations than in the past for reading, writing and spelling. Greater attention to presentation is aiding accuracy in mathematical calculation although too little attention is given to the use of a cursive script in literacy. Staff are getting better at identifying and bridging gaps in pupils' learning.

Current assessment information indicates that the gains in progress have yet to impact substantially on standards. The results of the school's most recent national assessments and tests show that there is still a good deal of work to do to raise standards at Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 so that they are at least in line with standards nationally. In the Early Years Foundation Stage standards remain low, particularly in speaking and listening, writing and calculation.



Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- Raise standards and improve pupils' achievement in English, mathematics and science, particularly in Years 3 to 6 – satisfactory.

Personal development and well-being

As a result of a more consistent approach by adults to managing behaviour, pupils' attitudes to school and to their work are improving; there are fewer disruptions to learning and the numbers excluded are falling. Pupils report that because work is more interesting and better organised they are enjoying school far more and making better progress. Break and lunchtimes are much more pleasant, with pupils enjoying the company of others and joining in games. Pupils take pride in their achievements, and are thrilled when they get a special mention in the celebration assemblies. The majority of classrooms now have a calm, purposeful working atmosphere, and staff report that, 'Pupils can focus and listen without being disturbed.' Nevertheless, many pupils have not acquired appropriate listening skills. They interrupt each other or shout out answers in their eagerness to demonstrate their growing knowledge.

The learning mentor is effective in ensuring that attendance continues to improve, although it remains below the national average. Punctuality is improving with the number of latecomers being halved over the past year. However, the persistent late arrival of a few pupils in most classes continues to adversely affect their achievement.

Quality of provision

The recently introduced policy for improving teaching and learning clearly identifies the features of good teaching and learning which the school expects. The policy is leading to more consistency. The use of interactive whiteboards is improving, which helps to engage and motivate pupils more in their work. The marking of pupils' work has improved and is usually linked to the learning objective of the lesson. Most staff follow the marking policy although targets to guide the next stage of learning remain variable in quality. In some lessons, questions are being used with increasing success to assess pupils' understanding and highlight the next steps in learning. Older pupils, in particular, like the 'steps to success' system which provides checklists to aid their learning.

Improvements in the pace of learning, teachers' subject knowledge and the use of assessment information to match work to pupils' needs are contributing to the better progress seen in some lessons. The presentation of pupils' work is improving and the amount of work completed has increased. The contribution of teaching assistants to pupils' learning is also improving. However, some whole-class sessions continue to be overlong and the balance between teaching and learning remains uneven so that, at times, pupils lose interest and have insufficient time to complete their work. A continuing focus on developing pupils' speaking and listening is paying dividends in Year 6. However, insufficient focus is still given in some classes to developing pupils' active

listening. This reflects lesson planning that focuses on activities to be completed rather than the skills and knowledge to be gained.

A recently developed, easy-to-use tracking system is generating an increasingly secure picture of pupils' starting points in their learning and helping to identify underachievement. Pupils' progress is now assessed half termly by teachers and termly through more formal testing. A whole-school approach to setting targets for pupils in reading, writing and numeracy is beginning to help pupils understand what they need to do to improve.

The focus on early identification of the needs of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities has improved since the previous monitoring inspection. The recently introduced action plan to ensure that their needs are met has appropriate priorities although the timescale for achieving these is insufficient to bring about rapid change. Support to pupils through the implementation of their individual educational plans is increasingly helpful although analytical review of these plans is at an early stage and the role of parents in the process remains underdeveloped. The special educational needs coordinator is attending training to improve the management of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities but still lacks a clear overview of the benefits of actions taken to secure improvements. There is now a clear distinction made between pupils who are underachieving, pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those learning English as an additional language: as a result, resources are deployed more appropriately.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- Improve the quality and consistency of teaching and learning, particularly teachers' use of assessment information to cater for pupils of all abilities – satisfactory.
- Ensure that teachers track pupils' progress rigorously to identify individual needs and eradicate underachievement – satisfactory.

Leadership and management

The headteacher's clear leadership continues to drive improvement forward although the contribution from middle managers remains of variable quality. At best it is aiding the school's improvement and staff are taking on more responsibilities commensurate with their posts. This goes some way to fulfilling the role of the absent key staff. However, in some areas of middle management change is taking longer to assimilate. As a result, despite the good support from the part-time acting deputy headteacher, the school remains overly reliant on the headteacher.

The school has responded appropriately to issues raised in the previous monitoring inspection. The headteacher has established a more systematic and formal approach to monitoring the quality of teaching and learning. Staff explain how helpful the consequent feedback is in developing their practice and raising pupils' progress. Performance

management for teachers has been established, staff morale is buoyant and staff are generally more aware of the need for swift and sustained improvement. The process of senior leaders meeting class teachers to discuss pupils' performance is helping to raise expectations of what pupils should achieve. The headteacher's monitoring of the school's work is increasingly evaluative. As a result, reports to governors are more informative and better structured to make clear the work completed and the impact of it on standards.

The school's view of its strengths and weaknesses is improving. For example, it has accurately identified weaknesses in the implementation of the curriculum for the Early Years Foundation Stage, particularly in provision for learning outdoors and in the development of children's skills in learning for themselves. Initial support from the local authority, that includes a project to establish an 'outside classroom' to better promote learning out of doors for children in the Reception Year, is a positive step forward.

A range of subject action plans have been recently established and these are helping to underpin improvements although not all include quantifiable targets for success or explain how these will be monitored.

The relationship between the governing body and the school is developing very positively. Governors are being linked to individual classes to gain first-hand knowledge of the quality of the school's work. Representatives of the governors and diocese continue to meet regularly and are effectively guided by the local authority to monitor the school's progress. Some governors have joined a successful group of parents trained to support the reading development of pupils whose families may not always be able to provide them with extra help. The diocese is providing support in developing the governors' strategic approach.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- Make sure that leaders and managers at all levels focus robustly and successfully on improving the quality of teaching and raising standards and achievement – satisfactory.
- Ensure that the governing body holds the school rigorously to account for its standards – satisfactory.

External support

The local authority is providing good support and challenge. This is a key factor in helping to improve the quality of teaching and learning and the school's developing self-evaluation. The local authority responds well to the school's needs, for example, in tailoring professional development to the requirements of individual staff. The school requested support from the local authority with the moderation of the Key Stage 1 teacher assessments in 2008. The local authority found the results to be insecure and recommended that the school reviewed the teacher assessments for all Year 2 pupils, moderate the results accordingly and submit the revised results to the local authority,

which the school has done. The governors appreciate the timely advice and guidance offered through the collaborative working group.

Priorities for further improvement

- Ensure the swift implementation of the new framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage.