

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



19 June 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 Naila Zaffar and Jon Lovgreen, additional inspectors, to your school on 17 and 18 June 2009, 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 April 2008. The monitoring inspection report is attached and the main judgements are set out below.

Progress since being subject to special measures – good

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – good

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
Lead inspector

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

Report from the third monitoring inspection on 17–18 June 2009

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, other staff, groups of pupils and representatives of the governing body and local authority.

Context

Since the previous monitoring inspection one deputy headteacher continues to be absent and a temporary teacher has left. Two senior leaders have returned from maternity leave. Two other teachers are absent due to illness. A leader for the Early Years Foundation Stage has been appointed to work part time this term and full time from September 2009.

Achievement and standards

Lesson observations, scrutiny of work and analysis of data show that in the present Year 6, standards are improving, particularly in science. Pupils have made good gains to fill in the gaps in their knowledge, understanding and skills that were a legacy of previous provision. Data suggest that across the school pupils are mostly making better progress and compensating for earlier underachievement, although standards in writing at Key Stage 2 remain weaker than in other tested subjects.

At Year 2, pupils also had a great deal to catch up on because of many changes in teaching in the past which greatly disrupted the continuity in their learning. Although progress has improved, standards remain similar to those in 2008 when they were significantly below average. In reading, standards are lower than in 2008. The school's action to provide training to teachers on how to guide pupils' reading has improved pupils' progress to a degree but the full impact of this work has yet to be seen.

Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those learning English as an additional language make similar progress to their classmates because of the extra help they receive. Even so, pupils' individual education plans are inconsistent in quality and teachers are often over-reliant on other assessments to guide pupils' learning.

In the Early Years Foundation Stage children's attainment remains low in basic skills, although their personal development is now much higher. Changes in the organisation of the Reception classes mean that children have increased opportunities to apply their personal skills to their learning in other aspects. It is in their quickening development of speaking and listening that this is most evident.

Progress since the last visit on the area 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

Plentiful and positive adult presence provides good role models for pupils. As a result, pupils are much more courteous and caring. Their commitment to racial tolerance, in particular, is very noticeable. Pupils' enjoyment of school is increasing and they report how safe and secure they feel having every confidence in staff to sort out any problems promptly. Pupils say that bullying has been eliminated. There have been no exclusions since the last monitoring inspection. Pupils see a big difference in the behaviour of their classmates and are pleased that lessons are not disrupted due to bad behaviour anymore. They are trusted to work hard in lessons and contribute well to the extra-curricular sporting activities such as rock climbing, football and cricket. 'Buddies' are allocated to new pupils joining the school. This helps all groups settle in well.

Attendance continues to improve and is a commendable 2% higher than it was last year. Persistent lateness is far more rare than at the last monitoring inspection. The learning mentor has led the drive to make pupils and parents understand the importance of punctual and regular attendance. The success of this initiative has resulted in pupils expecting more of themselves. Timely and rigorous monitoring impacts well on pupils' attendance, as do stricter rules about taking holidays in term time. Pupils are informed weekly about how close attendance is to targets and a system of rewards is a further incentive to pupils to attend school regularly.

Quality of provision

Overall, the quality of teaching and learning is improving well as is the consistency of approach. This is the result of training, coaching and careful monitoring as well as a willingness of teachers to do their best. As result, the weaknesses are discrete to particular classes. The difference between the good and the satisfactory teaching is mainly in the quality and interest of the tasks provided.

The continued implementation of the policy for teaching and learning is leading to a higher level of consistency in lesson planning and assessment. Planning now has a clearer focus on the skills to be taught and leads to improved pace in most learning. It usually ensures challenge for the higher attainers. Further improvements in the use of interactive whiteboards are helping maintain pupils' interests and increase the pace of learning. The increasing range of attractive displays celebrating pupils' achievement helps to motivate pupils. The presentation of pupils' work also continues to improve as pupils take a much greater pride in their work. The training and deployment of teaching assistants is increasing the levels of support to groups

and individual pupils enabling pupils to make faster progress and the gaps in their learning to be closed. Pupils developing English language skills are supported increasingly well through opportunities for discussion. Questioning is mostly of good quality, although in some classes tends to be aimed mostly at those pupils indicating they know the answer. As a result, the quieter pupils are at times overlooked.

Because of the greater regularity of assessment and a whole-school approach to the use of the resulting information, pupils' achievement is more consistently positive than in the past. The systems and use of assessment are building incrementally. For example, the quality of marking better follows the school policy on how to help pupils improve their work. The increased progress reflects the greater challenge given to pupils and the raised expectations by the staff of what the pupils can achieve. It has yet to impact fully on standards. The use of targets is growing so that pupils better understand what they are aiming for.

The information that leaders gain from the use of half-termly teacher assessments and formal termly assessments is used increasingly well to check carefully with teachers about how well classes and individual pupils are learning. An extensive tracking system is now fully in place and data are increasingly reliable. This gives managers and teachers a more accurate view of the progress pupils are making against targets. Teachers are increasingly skilled at linking data and pupils' performance, and adjusting lesson planning and activities accordingly. The school has yet to focus more sharply on the tracking and monitoring of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and those learning English as an additional language.

Good progress has been made in improving the provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage. The days are livelier and far more enjoyable for children and this helps to develop their independence. They have access to outdoor play and learning which is of far better quality than in the past. Parents comment favourably on how the changes are encouraging their children's attendance and enjoyment of school and say how 'more fulfilling' their learning is.

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 – good
- Ensure that teachers track pupils' progress rigorously to identify individual needs and eradicate underachievement – satisfactory

Leadership and management

Leadership is very purposeful and increasing the momentum of improvement. It is more sustainable than in the past because it is getting better at all levels. Evaluation by the headteacher is improving and helps to set a clearer agenda for development. The senior leadership team has been strengthened by the return of the deputy headteacher from maternity leave and the continuing secondment of the acting



deputy headteacher. Good improvement in middle leadership owes much to support from the local authority and the school's participation in training funded through the Greater Manchester Challenge initiative. Leaders of English, mathematics and science, in particular, are more confident in leading their subjects and are very clear about what needs to be done next to address weaknesses. Importantly, they are gaining a good overview of pupils' progress from the Reception class through to Year 6 which informs developments increasingly well. They are very conscious of what they need to do to raise standards in their subject to at least match those nationally and the importance of working together to set priorities. A cycle of monitoring is being implemented with more rigour than before and involves a wide range of staff.

Governors are better prepared than in the past to take on their role of challenge and support. This is because of good attendance at training events bespoke to the school by the diocese and the continuing efforts of the collaborative working group. The governors are increasingly fulfilling their strategic role as they gain in confidence and understanding in how best to support and challenge the school. An increasingly strong team spirit is giving the governing body more stability than in recent times and is opening opportunities for dialogue such as links between governors and classes. This is leading to a better understanding of how to raise standards.

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 – good
- Ensure that the governing body holds the school rigorously to account for its standards – good

External support

The local authority support continues to meet the developing needs of the school well without being intrusive. Consultants for teaching and learning have worked closely with the school. Training to develop the roles of middle leaders has been clearly focused and well received. As a result, a consistent approach to action planning is improving teamwork and enabling staff to have an understanding of the school's longer-term needs as well as its immediate ones. Timely support to the Early Years Foundation Stage is helping staff more fully understand the requirements of children at this pivotal early stage of their education.

Priorities for further improvement

- The priorities for further development continue to be those identified at the school's inspection in April 2008.