

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 566 935
Direct F 01695 729 320
LPitt@cfbt.com



10 July 2009

Mrs P Adams
Headteacher
Crab Lane Primary School
Crab Lane
Higher Blackley
Manchester
Lancashire
M9 8NB

Dear Mrs Adams

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Crab Lane Primary School

Following my visit with Michelle Ravey Additional Inspector, to your school on 8 and 9 July 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 – satisfactory

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – good

Newly qualified teachers may 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 the interim executive board and the Director of Children's Services for Manchester.

Yours sincerely

John Coleman
Her Majesty's Inspector

Special measures: monitoring of Crab Lane Primary School

Report from the third monitoring inspection on 8 and 9 July 2009

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, members of the school's senior and middle leadership teams, pupils, the chair of the interim executive board (IEB) and representatives from the local authority.

Context

Since the last monitoring visit, a new executive headteacher has been appointed following the departure of the substantive headteacher. She has been in post for approximately one term. The IEB meet fortnightly with the school and the local authority providing a strategic lead on the school's improvement plans. There has been one permanent appointment to a full-time teaching post. Significant changes have been made to the staffing structure and to the composition of classes, some of which are now amalgamated and this has reduced the number of mixed-age classes. There are now no supply teachers in post. The roles and responsibilities of the senior leadership team have been clarified and redistributed. Support for the school from local authority consultants and a school effectiveness officer continues, but the associate deputy headteacher post ceased at the end of the spring term, to coincide with the arrival of the executive headteacher.

Achievement and standards

Standards attained by pupils continue to rise, though the pace of this improvement varies across subjects and year groups. This variation shows a strong correlation to the staffing instability experienced by the school over time. Inspection evidence shows that the recent stabilising of staffing is leading to higher standards and improved rates of progress in pupils' learning. The provisional results for national tests in Year 6 are below average overall in English, mathematics and science. The school broadly met its targets set for the percentage of pupils attaining the national expectation of Level 4 in English and mathematics. The results are just above the combined national floor target for the first time in recent years. In science, the provisional results for Level 4 attainments are well above the school's target. However, provisional results for the higher Level 5 are well below the school's targets in mathematics and science. In English, they were broadly met. Pupils' attainment in the Year 2 teacher assessments for 2009, show they are below average overall and have exceeded the school's targets in reading, writing and mathematics for the nationally expected Level 2, but the higher Level 3 percentages are lower than the school predicted.

The school now has a good range of assessment data with which to measure pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics. This shows that the rate of progress is

accelerating. In writing, the progress made by pupils across the school is good in the spring and summer terms. Taken over the school year, this varies from inadequate to good in different year groups and is satisfactory overall. In mathematics, pupils' progress is more uneven ranging from inadequate to outstanding over the year. Progress overall in mathematics and reading is satisfactory and improving. The school is not yet able to provide data evidence with which to accurately measure pupils' progress in science; this is to be addressed immediately. Inspection evidence from lessons, talking to pupils and a scrutiny of their work, reveals inconsistency in the progress being made. The rate of progress follows the same pattern of improvement for English and mathematics, in that the most recent work shows greater progress and higher standards. Nevertheless, progress in science, especially for the higher attaining pupils, remains weaker than in English and mathematics. Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make similar progress to all pupils.

Progress since the last visit on the area for improvement:

- raise standards and eradicate underachievement in all subjects – satisfactory

Quality of provision

The quality of teaching seen during the inspection ranged from satisfactory to outstanding. Evidence from pupils' books and data showing their progress indicates that this quality is improving steadily due to effective staff training. The strongest teaching is in the Reception class, Year 2 and Year 5. No inadequate teaching was seen and school monitoring records show that no inadequate lessons have been observed this term. Throughout all classes, there are good relationships between pupils, with their teachers and support staff. Combined with pupils' good behaviour, this means that the basis for effective learning is in place. Teachers plan lessons carefully and are beginning to take full account of what pupils already know and can do, though this is not yet entirely consistent. In the best lessons, teachers inspire pupils' learning with their infectious enthusiasm, engaging teaching style and the pace at which they expect pupils to learn. For example, in a lesson seen by inspectors in the Reception class, the teacher used a story book in preparation for a school trip to the zoo. She brought this to life for the children in an outstanding way by using her tone of voice to imitate animal sounds. Simultaneously, she questioned the children about the number of arms and legs of different animals, helped them to count and the children wrote simple sentences on the whiteboard to tell parts of the story. Such quality of teaching is helping pupils to make good, and sometimes outstanding, progress in these lessons. However, while the proportion of good and outstanding teaching is increasing, it is a relatively recent improvement and is as yet, not sufficiently consistent across the school and all subjects. In weaker lessons, there is insufficient notice taken of prior learning so that some pupils fail to fully understand the task, or for some higher attaining pupils, the level of challenge offered by the task is too low. A common feature of satisfactory lessons is the lack of sufficiently high expectations as to what pupils can achieve in the time available, so that although the teaching delivery may be good, the rate and pace of learning thereafter, is less strong.



At the last inspection visit concerns were raised about the poor system for assessing children's needs and progress in Nursery. This is much improved and now mirrors more closely the excellent practice seen in the Reception class. The key workers are identified and the roles of each staff member are clear. Regular and structured assessment takes place throughout the day and this is carefully recorded. Each child has a 'learning journey', a folder containing annotated records of their achievement. These are used effectively to measure children's progress against the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum.

The school is in the process of developing the curriculum and is introducing more creativity by linking subjects together in topics or themes. Key skills are also being identified which pupils can use across the curriculum. It is early in the implementation of this development and in science, the process has just begun. The school recognises the need to speed up the curricular improvements, including the urgent requirement to address the lack of full entitlement in some subjects such as religious education. A strength of the curriculum is the enriched activities which include a range of visits and visitors, and the provision of extra activities at lunchtime and after school. New initiatives, such as, the recent science day are successful. For example, the school effectively used assessments of pupils' work to identify gaps in learning so that they could target these in a whole day dedicated to science work. The pupils say that they really enjoyed this; it was fun and they learned a lot. The school's commitment to providing a rich and rounded education is illustrated by the current production of *Oliver*, which is involving every pupil in Key Stage 2. Increasingly, computer technology is used to enliven pupils' learning such as 'animation nation' which enables pupils to design and produce their own DVD movie. This work brings together pupils' skills in literacy, art, media and design technology.

Effective tracking of pupils' progress in English and mathematics leads to the setting of suitable learning targets for most pupils. Pupils know their targets, though many are the same and are often quite broad. The system to monitor these is in its infancy as this is the first full term that they have been consistently used. In science, there are no targets as yet and no tracking is in place, though plans to install this are at an advanced position. The practice for marking in the school is variable and too much work is unmarked. Pupils with individual education plans have their targets regularly reviewed with good parental involvement. Overall, the attendance of pupils is below average and the school is rightly concerned to improve this. The school's monitoring of pupils' punctuality and attendance identifies those pupils who need support, and parents' meetings are held to highlight the issues and to suggest ways to improve.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- improve the consistency and quality of teaching and learning – good
- ensure that the quality of academic guidance is robust enough to ensure that all pupils know how well they are doing and how they need to improve – satisfactory

- ensure that the curriculum meets the needs of all pupils and effectively develops pupils' basic skills – satisfactory

Leadership and management

The IEB has acted decisively to improve the weaknesses identified at the last inspection visit. Changes made to the structure, composition and membership of the leadership and teaching staff team are providing clear direction and a shared focus on raising standards. The executive headteacher, who is a local leader in education (LLE), provides dynamic leadership and she inspires the school workforce. Following her initial review of the school's provision she has amalgamated some classes into single year groups, ensured that no classes are taught by temporary or supply staff and has re-structured the senior and middle leadership roles and responsibilities. As a result, the confidence of staff and pupils is rising and the quality of provision is improving. In particular, the quality of teaching is better because of well targeted staff training in subjects such as science. The school's evaluation of its strengths and weaknesses is accurate due to effective monitoring procedures at all levels. There is little complacency, and despite the recent surge in school improvement, there is a collegiate acknowledgement that much remains to be done before all pupils achieve what they should. The school has in place an appropriate plan which prioritises key improvement areas in a phased approach. Included in this, are several innovative initiatives to network with other schools and to utilise the cutting edge of computer technology to enrich pupils' learning experiences. Some of this exciting work has begun, but is at a very early stage of impacting on pupils' progress.

The school's procedures for safeguarding pupils are suitable, meet government requirements and the appropriate checks are made when staff appointments take place. The school completes a single central register for all staff and volunteers at the school as required by legislation.

Progress since the last visit on the area for improvement:

- ensure that the actions leaders take have a significant impact on improving the performance of the school – good

External support

The local authority support is good and provides significant consultancy in the Early Years Foundation Stage and literacy. Some support is also provided for attendance, science and mathematics, together with guidance for improving the quality of teaching and learning. Additionally, the school effectiveness officer successfully aids the senior leadership by monitoring the school's provision in a regular and systematic way. Reports from the school improvement partner are evaluative and helpful to the school. They use data well to identify underperformance and to pinpoint areas for improvement.

Priorities for further improvement

- Ensure that the curriculum timetable for all subjects delivers the full statutory entitlement.