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Ms J Shepherd
Acting Headteacher
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Waverley Road
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M24 6JG

Dear Ms Shepherd

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Hollin Primary School

Following my visit Naila Zaffar additional inspector, to your school on 24 and 25 June 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 November 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

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 Executive Director, Children Schools and Families for Rochdale.

Yours sincerely

Jane Austin
Her Majesty's Inspector

Special measures: monitoring of Hollin Primary School

Report from the second monitoring inspection on 24 and 25 June 2009

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work including 12 lessons, two registrations and two assemblies; scrutinised documents and met with the acting headteacher, staff, the parents' champion, groups of pupils, the chair of the interim executive board (IEB), the National Leader in Education and representatives from the local authority.

Context

Since the first monitoring visit the headteacher has resigned and the school is being led this term by an acting headteacher. The IEB is currently recruiting a substantive headteacher.

Achievement and standards

The school has made significant strides in establishing a centralised and accessible electronic tracking system. Half-termly assessment points have been implemented and responsibility for recording and tracking pupils' progress rightly placed with class teachers. Staff are rising to this challenge with its increased levels of accountability, and the current position of every pupil, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, with regard to the core subjects is now known. Suitable training has been held to improve the security of assessments and the school is beginning to use a system that measures the small steps in progress for pupils working below National Curriculum levels. Targets have been reviewed so that the school is now aiming to reach standards that would place it in the top quarter of similar schools. Areas of underachievement are identified at each assessment point and appropriate interventions to redress these put into place. A clear distinction is being made between underachievement and learning difficulties. Well-defined individual education plans now shape the delivery by skilled teaching assistants in one-to-one and group sessions.

The leadership of inclusion has been reviewed and placed on a broader and more secure footing. The strategic direction of this area is clear in terms of pupils' progress and training to meet staff development needs. The school is beginning to collaborate more systematically and effectively with external agencies, attending multi-disciplinary meetings for vulnerable pupils and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, to access services for pupils and families through support in school and beyond. Good links are made with the collocated special school to build on each others strengths both at staff and pupil level.

The 2009 profile shows that children make at least good progress in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Children enter Nursery with skills that are consistently low overall, and in relation to communication, language and literacy, sometimes very low, when

compared with those typical for their age. By the end of Reception this year's cohort has reached levels that are below average in communication, language and literacy but broadly average in problem solving, reasoning and number.

The 2009 results of the Key Stage 1 assessments are lower than those for the previous year, in part due to the number of pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities in this much smaller cohort. While performance at the expected levels is broadly average (compared to the 2008 national figures), the proportion of pupils reaching the higher levels is well below average. No pupils reached Level 3 in writing, mathematics and science. Girls outperform boys in all the core subjects. Overall, pupils made satisfactory progress in Key Stage 1; girls made better progress than boys.

The school's data indicate that outcomes of this year's national tests for Year 6 pupils are likely at least to reach the government's floor targets. Across Key Stage 2, pupils' progress has accelerated recently, particularly in Year 6. Nonetheless, only about 50% of Year 6 pupils reached their targets. Similar proportions in the remainder of Key Stage 2 have met their targets in reading and writing; performance in mathematics is weaker overall. The rate of pupils' progress is hampered by their legacy of underachievement and teaching which is not consistently good enough to eradicate this.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- Raise standards and accelerate achievement in mathematics, writing and science at Key Stage 2 – satisfactory
- Do more to boost the achievement of pupils who find learning hard, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities – satisfactory

Personal development and well-being

The school has adopted a robust approach to improving attendance. A thorough analysis of trends in absence has been conducted and a well-focused action plan drawn up to bring about improvements. Regular and effective liaison with the Educational Welfare Service is resulting in a concerted approach to making parents aware of their responsibilities in this area. There is some evidence that the attendance panels, now run jointly, are having a positive impact by providing support as well as challenge to parents. Pupils' understanding of the importance of attendance is developing effectively, supported by weekly awards and prominently displayed charts. The number of persistent absentees has reduced. The overall rate of attendance for this year shows a small improvement on the previous year, although it remains below average. Just over 10% of pupils have attendance below 85% which means that they miss almost six weeks of school during the year. Nearly half the pupils miss two weeks of lessons during the year. This is having a negative impact on the progress they make and the standards they reach.

The parents' champion is playing a significant role in improving communications with parents. She regularly canvasses parents' views in a range of ways such as

informally at the school gate, through coffee mornings and, recently, through a questionnaire. The outcomes of this indicate increased levels of parental satisfaction with the school. A weekly newsletter is providing an effective way of communicating with parents and this always includes reports on attendance. The parents' champion is responsive to parents' requests and suggestions and has moved swiftly to broker a variety of workshops on issues such as job applications, basic skills and volunteering.

Progress since the last visit on the area for improvement:

- Persist with developing strategies to raise attendance – satisfactory

Quality of provision

There is clear evidence of improvements in teaching across the school and these are beginning to impact positively on learning, although not with sufficient consistency to accelerate pupils' progress markedly. The learning environment is more vibrant with a good range of celebratory displays and interactive learning walls. Where learning is good, activities are varied to appeal to different learning styles and work is matched to pupils' needs. Speaking and listening are promoted well through techniques such as talking partners and hot seating. Pupils behave well and display enthusiasm, excitement and a passion for learning. During these lessons they have opportunities to take some responsibility for their learning through, for instance, assessing their own work and that of their classmates. Teaching assistants provide effective support so pupils with challenging behaviour are skilfully kept on task and make progress.

However, the amount of good teaching is outweighed by satisfactory teaching which does not engage pupils fully in their learning because it lacks variety and vitality. In these lessons, pupils spend long periods on the carpet listening to teachers. They are not actively involved in their learning so they lose interest and their attention wanes. Although learning objectives and success criteria are shared with pupils, these are often presented in language that is too sophisticated so presenting a barrier to learning rather than a support for it. Marking is improving and pupils are taking part in the assessment of their own learning through thumbs up or down and smiley or sad faces. The school has sound plans in place to develop further the guidance given to pupils on the next steps to improving their learning.

Progress since the last visit on the area for improvement:

- Use assessment information more effectively, particularly at Key Stage 2, to plan work that meets pupils' individual needs and enables pupils to make good progress – satisfactory

Leadership and management

The acting headteacher is providing a strong, highly effective lead to the school that is welcomed by staff. With calm assurance, she has successfully steered the school through a turbulent period. Morale has improved and staff are pulling together with a sense of common purpose to improve the school. The pace of change has

accelerated considerably. The action plan has been revamped so that it is now fit for purpose; it is a working document for which staff take some ownership. It provides a firm basis for action, clear targets to aim for and identifies the training required for staff to develop the skills needed to move the school forward.

As a consequence of better monitoring and evaluation, alongside improved tracking of pupils' progress, senior leaders have increasingly robust information on which to base strategic decisions. Evaluations of the school's position are well founded on frequent, wide-ranging monitoring of provision and its impact. While the acting headteacher is conducting much of this, senior leaders are becoming more involved and a regular cycle for quality assurance is being established. The roles of the senior leadership team have been reviewed to encompass appropriate whole-school responsibilities and, although this new structure is intended to operate fully from September, some elements are already in place. For example, the deputy headteacher has recently taken up the brief for inclusion, building into the school's structure an approach likely to foster a broader and better targeted approach to meeting the needs of all pupils. Suitable coaching and training are supporting senior leaders to meet their new responsibilities, as is the modelling of good practice by the acting headteacher. Further changes to the staffing structure for the next academic year are well considered, providing a better balance of responsibilities.

The IEB is adding significant strength to the strategic leadership of the school through members' wide-ranging professional expertise, commitment and dynamism. The IEB is ambitious for the school and providing good support to the acting headteacher in working towards its targets.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- Develop robust systems to monitor and evaluate the school's work in order to better inform self-evaluation and development planning – good

External support

The local authority is providing good support to increase the school's capacity to improve. This is most evident in the appointment of the acting headteacher but also in the more recent placement of an advanced skills teacher to work alongside staff in classrooms. The resources of Greater Manchester Challenge are being drawn on to good effect: there are helpful plans in place to provide leadership coaching for the deputy headteacher next term. The National Leader in Education is making a valuable contribution to developing the school's leadership in a range of ways. There are well-considered plans to extend this support to teaching staff next term. A productive relationship with the collocated special school is developing well.

Priorities for further improvement

- Improve the quality of learning to at least good in order to accelerate pupils' progress.