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14 July 2009

Ms Julia Waters
Executive Headteacher
St Teresa's Catholic Primary School
Montacute Road
Morden
SM4 6RL

Dear Ms Waters

Special measures: monitoring inspection of St Teresa's Catholic Primary School

Following my visit with David White and Andrew Lyons, Additional Inspectors, to your school on 7 and 8 July 2009, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the fifth monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures in October 2007. 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 be appointed with the agreement of the monitoring HMI.

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 Archdiocese of Southwark and the Head of School Improvement for Merton.

Yours sincerely

Elisabeth Linley
Her Majesty's Inspector

Special measures: monitoring of St Teresa's Catholic Primary School

Report from the fifth monitoring inspection on 7 and 8 July 2009

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and examples of pupils' work, and met with the chair of governors and members of the governing body. Inspectors also met with the executive and associate headteachers, middle leaders and managers, a representative of the local authority and different groups of pupils, including members of the school council.

Context

The soft federation between St Teresa's Catholic Primary School and The Ursuline Catholic High School for girls came into operation at the start of the summer term. As a result, the headteacher of The Ursuline High School took up her post as executive headteacher of St Teresa's for two days each week, with an associate headteacher who joined St Teresa's in a full-time capacity in May 2009. At the same time, the acting deputy headteacher resumed her former position as assistant headteacher. The deputy headteacher, who had previously been acting headteacher, left the school at the beginning of the summer term on maternity leave.

Since the last monitoring visit, a number of staff appointments have been made. The appointments include class teachers and staff who will join the leadership team. The new staff will join the school in September 2009. Governor vacancies have also been filled and three new parent governors have joined the governing body.

The number of pupils on roll has increased and there are now 476 pupils on roll. Pupil mobility continues to be an issue for the school, with a larger than usual number of pupils joining the school. The proportion of pupils joining the school who have English as an additional language or are new to English is also increasing.

Achievement and standards

The unvalidated data from the 2009 assessments and tests taken by pupils in Year 2 and Year 6 show that standards in Key Stage 1 remain similar to those achieved in 2008. Although more pupils attained the age-related expectations in reading, writing and mathematics, slightly fewer pupils achieved at the higher level. In Key Stage 2 the results of the tests in mathematics and science were similar to those in 2008. Standards in English, however, fell and reflect a decline in writing attainment. Standards overall have been affected by inward mobility during the year. However, in recent months there is evidence that pupils' progress is beginning to accelerate, with all groups of pupils making similar rates of progress. The improvement has been achieved by the introduction of rigorous and robust assessment and pupil tracking systems, which have led to teachers having a more secure understanding

of assessment levels. An improved understanding of assessment has also enabled teachers to provide the pupils with specific advice on how to improve their work.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- raise standards in English and science and ensure greater consistency in standards in mathematics by matching work more closely to pupils' needs and challenging able pupils more effectively so that they make better progress – satisfactory

Personal development and well-being

The school continues to make a conscious effort to celebrate pupils' achievements. The weekly 'Reach for the Stars' assembly, where children from each class are praised for the progress they have made, is eagerly anticipated. The school council, with representatives from all classes, is developing its part in the school's decision making. For example, it has put forward its views about changes to the school's sanction system. A head boy and a head girl have been elected for next year and there are more roles being developed, so that children can take responsibility. Pupils believe that the school is getting better and their attendance is gradually improving. They feel that bullying, when it occurs, is being dealt with more effectively, but several pupils said that name calling is still an issue that affects and upsets them. Behaviour, when supervised, is good. However, behaviour is more boisterous when pupils are returning from playtime or walking in the corridors.

Quality of provision

Since the last monitoring visit, senior leaders and the local authority have worked with staff to identify the reliability of assessment data. This has had the immediate effect of teachers knowing exactly what standards the pupils have attained in their work. As a result, they are planning better to meet the needs of the different groups of pupils in lessons. Although inadequate teaching remains, there is evidence of more good teaching in school. Much of the good teaching observed was in the Early Years Foundation Stage, where children are provided with good opportunities for learning. Teachers plan well for children to become independent learners through a good balance of teacher-directed and self-initiated activities. In Key Stages 1 and 2, even where teaching is satisfactory, feedback to pupils has improved and pupils are now more involved in the evaluation of their own work. Where teaching is consistently good, questioning and the pace of lessons are good, and teachers have high expectations of pupils which are shared effectively with them.

During the current term, there has been a significant impetus to improve the provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and for those who have English as an additional language. The inclusion manager, who will join the school in September, has been visiting the school each week since she was appointed. She has reviewed the school's work and has, rightly, identified the need for support to be more carefully planned to meet pupils' different needs. Work to develop provision for pupils who are gifted and talented has improved. Pupils on the

'gifted and talented register' said they appreciated the opportunities they had with the Ursuline School and recognised that 'experiences' in school were better. However, they still felt that they were not sufficiently stretched in English and mathematics. The school has made progress in making writing a regular feature of the curriculum. However, all pupils would benefit from developing their speaking and listening skills, with more focused questioning to help them develop their language so that they can express themselves better in their writing. Academic guidance is better and the advice the teachers give pupils when marking their work, through 'next steps', is now focused on helping them to improve.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- raise the quality of teaching so that a much greater proportion is good – satisfactory
- improve the quality of support for pupils with learning difficulties and pupils who are learning English so that they make more sustained progress – satisfactory

Leadership and management

The executive headteacher and associate headteacher have been highly effective in leading and managing change since the last monitoring visit. A key focus of the school's work has been to strengthen the approach to assessment so that the school's work to raise standards can be monitored with accuracy. This, in turn, has led to a consistent approach being developed to track and measure pupils' progress during the current term. Assessment information gathered has shown quite clearly that more needs to be done in terms of the curriculum to improve writing and to ensure that intervention strategies are well placed and are specific to the pupils' needs. An audit of provision and its delivery has also revealed the need for greater training and line management of teaching assistants so that they become more effective in their roles to support groups of pupils with different needs.

Significant work has been completed this term to strengthen the leadership and management of the school. Work with middle managers has continued and most are becoming more confident and effective to lead and manage. The work to engage parents has continued with further success. Parents value the improved lines of communication with class teachers, for example, who can be contacted by email. They appreciate the pupils' 'Learning Log', which aids effective communication on homework, and the communication recently in place about their children who have been identified as gifted and talented. Work with the governors has been extended. A complete review of their organisation has taken place and is set to become effective from September 2009. In addition, the monitoring and evaluation of provision and the progress that pupils make have improved. As a result, the school is well focused on the work that is required to raise standards in English, mathematics and science.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- improve the quality of leadership and management by establishing better links with governors and parents and setting the right priorities for improvement that will raise standards – good

External support

Following the last monitoring visit, the local authority moved swiftly and effectively to aid the school's work on assessment. Consultants worked in school with staff to moderate assessments of pupils' work. Consultants also continued to provide support for the Early Years Foundation Stage staff and for provision for those pupils who have English as an additional language or who are new to English. Other work has continued with London City Challenge, to develop the roles of middle leaders and this work has complemented that planned and delivered by the executive and associate headteachers. The new partnership with the Ursuline School is already having a positive impact in engaging learners across the curriculum. The good quality of external support is valued by staff, senior leaders and governors.

Priorities for further improvement

- Improve pupils' oracy and writing skills by providing regular and varied curriculum opportunities, through which they can be developed.
- Develop the skills of teaching assistants so that they may be used more effectively throughout school to aid pupils' learning and achievement.

