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12 December 2009

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

Dear Mrs Adams

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Crab Lane Primary School

Following my visit with Diane Auton, additional inspector, to your school on 10 and 11 December 2009, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the fourth 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 fourth monitoring inspection on 10 and 11 December 2009

### Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents including the school's safeguarding records 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, the work of the school continues to be led by the executive headteacher who was appointed at the beginning of the summer term 2009. The IEB is now meeting each month rather than fortnightly with the school and local authority, reflecting their increasing confidence in the school's leadership. There has been one permanent appointment to a full-time teaching post in Key Stage 2. Also, an additional appointment has been made to the role of lunchtime organiser. The composition and organisation of classes this term continues the policy of maintaining single age groups. Class sizes have grown. Any staff absence is covered internally. The school continues to receive support from the local authority through the school effectiveness officer and associated colleagues.

### Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning

The standards attained by pupils are rising faster and more consistently than at the time of the last visit. Variations still exist which are largely due to the historical staffing instabilities and poor prior attainment of some cohorts of pupils. In the Early Years Foundation Stage, the school's data shows that the skills, knowledge and understanding of the majority of children are improving significantly. The progress made by the highest attaining children is not as strong. Pupils in Key Stage 1 are improving their rates of progress significantly. In mathematics, they are making much better progress and standards are rising more quickly. In Key Stage 2, progress is also much improved with the oldest pupils making the greatest gains. In Years 5 and 6 the improved rate of progress in the autumn term in mathematics is especially strong and for Year 6 pupils in English and science too. Progress for Year 6 in information and communication technology (ICT) is growing. The slower pace of progress for pupils in Year 3 and 4 is being successfully addressed by the school's leadership through prompt intervention for pupils who are not achieving as well as they should. Observations of lessons by inspectors, confirms the indications given by the school's data. They give clear evidence that pupils in the school are making much improved progress this term and standards are rising more quickly than has previously been seen.



Progress since the last visit on the area for improvement:

- raise standards and eradicate underachievement in all subjects – good

#### Other relevant pupil outcomes

In the school year 2008/2009 the attendance of pupils declined and the proportion of persistent absence increased. As a result, the school's leadership put into place a range of strategies to improve this. The school works closely with the local authority attendance officer and a parent support worker. The school's policy for encouraging good attendance has been reviewed. The school has implemented this policy with rigour, including newly introduced electronic registration, a five tier attendance monitoring system, greater involvement of parents and a structured reward system to celebrate pupils who attend regularly. In the autumn term, the percentage of pupils attending school rose compared with the same period a year ago. Also, the numbers of pupils who are persistently absent has fallen. Despite this improvement, the rates for both these measures are unacceptable and further improvement is needed to ensure that pupils with poor attendance rates do not fall behind in their learning as a consequence.

#### The effectiveness of provision

The quality of teaching and learning is improving strongly because of effective measures put into place by the school's leadership. The lessons seen during this visit were mostly good and some outstanding practice was seen by inspectors. The school's monitoring records show that many more lessons are now good. The impact of this good teaching is seen in the improving progress which pupils make as shown by the school's data. This encouraging profile of classroom practice is relatively recent in terms of consistency. Although pupils are now making much better overall progress, the impact on the standards attained is only just beginning to bear fruit. There is still some way to go before these standards are raised high enough.

In the lessons seen, pupils behave well and show increasingly good attitudes to learning. Relationships between pupils and with the staff are very good. Staff provide high quality emotional and academic support which improves pupils' confidence and self esteem. There is good use of partner work. For example, pupils benefit from rehearsing their ideas by talking to friends before expressing them publicly. The pace, challenge and expectations of learning are much improved in most lessons. A good example seen in some classes is the '5 minute challenge', during which pupils are expected to complete a given task. This is a significant improvement since the last visit. There is a strong focus on developing pupils' problem solving skills by providing activities which require pupils to apply their

knowledge and skills. An outstanding feature of one lesson was the interaction and teamwork seen between the teacher and the teaching assistant. Their interplay provided pupils with a challenging dialogue which questioned their learning, consolidated points covered in the lesson and sustained pupils' interest. Developments in teachers' planning are ongoing and examples of very good mathematics plans currently being used in Year 5 and 6 are soon to be extended to the rest of the school.

Developments in the curriculum are being well led by the school's leadership team. There are many initiatives at an early stage of implementation and it is too soon to measure the impact on pupils' learning. However, the signs are encouraging as monitoring systems are established which are firmly focused on the outcomes for pupils' learning and progress. There is a sharper focus on developing pupils' reading skills through daily guided sessions in every class. Ability groups have been introduced in Years 1-3 for phonic teaching. Additional ICT resources are in place to support literacy learning. An innovative approach is taken to delivering the foundation subjects of the national curriculum, those other than English, mathematics and science, which provides many opportunities for pupils to practise and develop their basic skills. And, significantly, the organisation of interventions for pupils who need extra support, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, is much improved. Plans for the curriculum are well conceived, but much is still in relative infancy and is work in progress, and the impact on raising standards remains to be seen.

The quality of marking has improved greatly since the last visit. Teachers mark conscientiously and provide effective feedback to pupils about how to improve their work. There is a developing dialogue between teachers and pupils. In lessons, teachers and assistants frequently check on how pupils are progressing using 'show me' approaches. During formal teaching sessions, staff use a range of assessment techniques to make sure that pupils understand what is being taught before moving on to the next step. Pupils are beginning to use a traffic light system to help them to self-assess their work. Targets are set for pupils to achieve in each of the core subjects of the curriculum. Pupils are knowledgeable about their targets and talk confidently about what they mean.

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



## The effectiveness of leadership and management

The IEB effectively holds the school's leadership to account for the performance of the school. It challenges evaluations of data and insists on improvements in pupils' learning. The relationship between the IEB, the local authority and the headteacher is effective in maximising the impact of strategies to improve the school. The headteacher is building a strong senior leadership team which is focused, organised and highly motivated. The team now monitor the school's provision and pupils' outcomes with rigour and determination. Their evaluations are accurate, and incisive plans for improvement are in place. Curriculum teams are being developed. Staff training is well matched to the school's priorities and evaluations give the senior leaders clear feedback on the impact of this.

Improvements brought about by the school's leadership during the period of the last two inspection visits have gone a long way to rectify the slow and inadequate progress which was judged in the two visits prior to this. Standards are rising as a result of significant improvements in the rate and consistency of pupils' progress. The leadership are not complacent and realise that this needs to be further sustained.

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

There continues to be good support for the school from the local authority and in particular the school effectiveness officer and her colleagues who act in a consultancy role to curriculum leaders. The School Improvement Partner provides sharp and incisive analysis about the school's improvement and performance.

## Priorities for further improvement

- Improve rates of pupils' attendance and reduce the proportion of persistent absence.