

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 566930
Direct F 01695 729320

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Mrs Jane Gornell
Headteacher
Old Hall Drive Primary School
Old Hall Drive
Gorton
Manchester
M18 7FU

Dear Mrs Gornell

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Old Hall Drive Primary School

Following my visit with Suzi Clipson-Boyles, 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 first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures in July 2009. The monitoring inspection report is attached and the main judgements are set out below.

Progress since being subject to special measures – satisfactory

Newly Qualified Teachers may not be appointed.

I am copying this letter and the monitoring inspection report to the Secretary of State, the chair of governors and the Director of Children's Services for Manchester.

Yours sincerely

Mark Williams
Her Majesty's Inspector



Special measures: monitoring of Old Hall Drive Primary School

Report from the first monitoring inspection on 10 and 11 December 2009

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work. They visited 10 lessons in Years 1 to 6 and a small number of sessions in the Early Years Foundation Stage (Nursery and Reception classes). They also scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher; the assistant headteachers; groups of pupils, including the school council; groups of parents, including 54 who attended a specially arranged meeting on the second day of the monitoring inspection; a number of governors; and a representative from the local authority.

Context

The school is in the process of advertising for a deputy headteacher. Currently, two assistant headteachers are in post, one of whom is on a temporary contract for the duration of this academic year.

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

Unvalidated data from national tests carried out in the summer of 2009 show standards at the end of Key Stage 1 in reading and writing to be low and below average in mathematics. In Key Stage 2, standards in English and mathematics are low and are below average in science. With the exception of science in Key Stage 2 which remained the same, standards were lower than in 2008. These standards, nonetheless, represent satisfactory progress from pupils' low starting points. Current work in pupils' books, plus evidence gained from lessons seen during the monitoring inspection, indicate a continuing trend of low standards and satisfactory learning and progress. Learning and progress are no better than satisfactory overall because pupils are not always given the most appropriate work in lessons and the quality of marking is not consistent enough to allow them to move onto the next steps of learning.

Other relevant pupil outcomes

There has been an improvement in pupils' overall behaviour. The school's decision to split up break and lunchtime sessions to reduce the number of pupils outside at any one time has proved to be effective. Coupled with improved outdoor facilities, for example the new climbing frame and the quiet area, these steps have ensured pupils have space to play football, practise dancing or, if they wish to, to sit quietly and chat with friends. During the inspection they did so sensitively and sensibly, although a small number of younger pupils are still not aware of 'no-go' areas and too much litter is left lying around. Behaviour on the corridors has improved and the rowdiness



that once existed is no longer evident. Pupils are much more positive about behaviour and reported bullying has reduced greatly. Parents are more confident, too, with those from minority ethnic backgrounds reporting a reduction in racist incidents. A few parents, however, still report behaviour around the toilet areas as a concern.

While behaviour outside and on the corridors has improved, it is not always good in classrooms. Too often during the monitoring inspection lessons were disrupted because of low-level chatter, even after teachers had asked pupils to stop. This disrupts learning. The challenge for the school, as the headteacher agrees, is to ensure that pupils' developing social behaviour and responsibility – enhanced by pupils' involvement in the school council and Eco and media teams, for example – include all aspects of school life.

Pupils report they are enjoying school more than they did so in the past. This, however, is not reflected in their attendance which is low when compared with other schools. Nonetheless, they enjoy the range of clubs and activities and are proud of their sporting achievements, keenly reporting, for example, a victory in a football match against a neighbouring school. In addition, pupils are enjoying preparing for a parade featuring Asian dancing. Opportunities such as these are successfully countering previous negative attitudes towards other cultures.

Progress since the last inspection:

- Improve pupils' behaviour and eliminate all aspects of bullying and incidents of a racist and sexist nature – satisfactory

The effectiveness of provision

In Years 1 to 6, four good and six satisfactory lessons were observed by inspectors. Where teaching was good, pupils were engaged in their learning and activities for different groups of pupils were matched to their needs well. However, this was not the case across the school. Teachers are inconsistent in the way they use assessments of what pupils can do in planning lessons that ensure pupils make better than satisfactory progress in their learning. In some lessons the more able pupils make good progress and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities do not. In other lessons the picture is reversed. This means that the recently revised curriculum, which draws on pupils' ideas and contributions well, is not yet being used to best effect. Also inconsistent is the use of teaching assistants and the quality of marking. There are some examples of very good marking in which the teacher has commented on what the pupils have learned and has then clearly identified how they could improve. There are other examples of marking which are cursory.



There is a mixed picture of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage. The outdoor provision offers good opportunities for learning through play, although litter presenting slipping hazards was evident. The indoor learning environment in the Reception classes is of a higher standard than that found in the Nursery. The Reception class igloos, for example, provide a very positive stimulus for the children.

Progress since the last inspection:

- Increase the proportion of good teaching so that the improvements in achievement are sustained and standards rise – satisfactory

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Leaders, staff and governors are determined to secure improvement. There remains, however, a large degree of inconsistency which, while not presenting high levels of risk for pupils, highlight too wide an understanding and application of school policies. For example, the school's audit of the welfare requirements for the Early Years Foundation Stage is too general and lacks specifics such as logs of checks on outdoor provision. The school has not considered potential risk assessments linked to the new, high-quality playground equipment, for example when conditions are icy. There is a lack of cleanliness around the school, for example too much litter in outdoor play areas and evidence of dirty mats, rugs and cushions in the Nursery. During the inspection, a gate from the Nursery outdoor area was unlocked, potentially giving children access to the car-parking area. In addition, young pupils were observed playing and sliding around the new climbing frame without supervision. These were quickly corrected by staff once they were made aware of or observed these situations.

More positively, much good work has been done already to improve the promotion of community cohesion. This has included the establishment of a working party comprising local police and fire officers, governors and parents. Another improvement, and much needed since the previous inspection, is the way the school is now engaging with pupils and parents. The school has listened to the views of pupils and has, as a result, provided more clubs, activities and opportunities for pupils to take on board responsibilities. They are doing so with glee publishing, for example, their own newsletter. Relations with parents and carers have improved well. Their views have been sought and acted on. Fifty four parents attended a meeting with an inspector and were positive about the school's work. They reported an increased sense of value particularly with courses which are made available to them. They are pleased with the better behaviour of pupils while, at the same time acknowledging there is still work to be done, for example, in providing support for parents of pupils who misbehave. While this improvement is positive, leaders are aware there are still parents and carers who are hard to reach and, as yet, are not engaged with the school.



Systems for recording incidents and complaints are now in place and in use. Leaders and governors do not yet monitor and evaluate these records rigorously nor do the records of complaints include details of what has been resolved. Nonetheless, the accuracy of records – a feature missing in the past – now provides a baseline on which to make future comparisons. Leaders are also seeking to improve the overall quality of teaching across the school so that more is good or better. They are successfully ensuring there is none which is inadequate. However, their focus in judging the quality of lessons is too much on what teachers do rather than what pupils are learning.

Progress since the last inspection:

- Improve the monitoring and evaluation of procedures and policies for welfare, child protection, equal opportunities and community cohesion to make sure they are having the desired impact – inadequate
- Ensure that parents' and pupils' views are taken into account when evaluating the school's performance – good
- Improve systems for recording incidents and investigating parents' complaints and ensure that the outcomes are monitored rigorously – satisfactory

External support

The local authority is providing helpful support for the school in a number of ways including improving pupils' behaviour and attendance. Along with the school it can be pleased with the progress made with behaviour. The impact of its work regarding attendance is yet to be seen. The local authority's statement of action is satisfactory. It provides a clear overview but is not yet precise enough in articulating what will constitute success.

Priorities for further improvement

Leaders and governors should ensure:

- all adults in the school are consistent in their understanding and application of school policies
- teachers make better use of their assessments of what pupils can do to plan learning opportunities which more closely meet the needs of all the pupils in their classes
- the best practice in teachers' marking is a consistent feature across the school.

