

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

18 March 2010

Mrs M Cunningham
Associate Headteacher
St Margaret Mary's RC Primary School
St Margaret's Road
New Moston
Manchester
M40 0JE

Dear Mrs Cunningham

Special measures: monitoring inspection of St Margaret Mary's RC Primary School

Following my visit with Michael Sheridan HMI to your school on 16 and 17 March 2010, 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 second monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures in May 2009. 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 not 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, the Director of Children's Services for Manchester and the Diocese.

Yours sincerely

Pat Kime
Her Majesty's Inspector



Special measures: monitoring of St Margaret Mary's RC Primary School

Report from the second monitoring inspection on 16 and 17 March 2010

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the associate headteacher and associate deputy headteacher; staff with leadership responsibilities; pupils; parents; and representatives of the Interim Executive Board, the local authority and Greater Manchester Challenge.

Context

The headteacher remains unwell and the school continues to be led and managed by an associate headteacher who has been at the school for four days a week since mid-November 2009. She is due to continue working with the school until the end of the current academic year. An Interim Executive Board (IEB) continues to carry responsibility for governance of the school.

Despite a recruitment exercise, the school has not been able to appoint a deputy headteacher. At the time of this monitoring visit a member of the local authority's staff had been at the school for three weeks as associate deputy headteacher. Since the previous monitoring visit, one teacher has left the school and one teacher has joined on a temporary basis. Most of the remaining teachers took on different classes at the start of this term. The advanced skills teacher is at the school part time and is deployed to support teachers' development.

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

Attainment is higher in the current Year 6 than it was for last year's leavers but a gender gap persists, with boys doing less well than girls, especially in English. However, this is not the case in all year groups and the school's tracking of pupils' progress shows some overall narrowing of the gap. In Key Stage 1, pupils' rate of progress has improved as a result of better teaching with higher expectations. Nonetheless, there is a legacy of underachievement in Year 2 and, for many, quite a gap to bridge if they are to meet their targets for the end of the year. Writing remains an area of weakness in most year groups. More pupils are behind their targets in writing than in reading and mathematics.

Most pupils work hard. They are enthusiastic learners who want to do well. Boys and girls feel that they are making better progress. Parents said that their children are happier at school and are making progress.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- raise pupils' achievement in English, mathematics and science – satisfactory

Other relevant pupil outcomes

Pupils said that behaviour in lessons has improved and there is a better atmosphere for learning.

The effectiveness of provision

The overall quality of teaching has improved. No inadequate teaching was seen, though a small proportion was barely satisfactory. Half of the lessons seen in Key Stages 1 and 2 were taught well. The improvement in teaching is most marked in Key Stage 1, where expectations have risen and there is a palpable enthusiasm for continuing development.

Teachers were initially hesitant about taking new classes but they have responded positively to the changes and have benefited from a good amount of additional training and coaching, mainly from local authority staff but also in-house. The roles and responsibilities of teaching assistants have been reviewed and each is now attached to a class to support pupils' learning in English and mathematics. As a result, their contribution has improved. Nonetheless, at times, they focus overly on ensuring that pupils complete set tasks rather than deepening their understanding of the work.

Typically, teachers have good relationships with their pupils. They know where they are up to in their learning and, for the most part, they plan activities that are suitably matched to the range of ability in their class. Two key features seen in several lessons motivate pupils; keep them focused on their work and support boys' learning. First, each lesson has clear, precise, achievable learning objectives against which pupils see their progress. Second, there is a variety of activities within a lesson and each chunk of new learning is summarised and consolidated. There were three predominant shortcomings seen in teaching that was no better than satisfactory. These were: less effective use of assessment to give a focus to the lesson and to check pupils' understanding; less effective management of pupils so some did not sustain concentration on their work; and spending too much time going over instructions when pupils were ready to start work.

The marking of pupils' work has continued to improve and some is of a very good quality. Teachers normally indicate how pupils might improve their work. They set appropriate short-term targets for individuals and groups of pupils and they focus pupils' attention on these in lessons. Pupils read their teacher's feedback eagerly and usually act on it.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:



- Improve the consistency of teaching and learning, particularly in Key Stage 1 – good
- Improve guidance for pupils on how to improve their work – good

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The associate headteacher has an accurate view of the school's effectiveness. She knows where improvements are needed. She has shown the capacity to move the school forward and she has created a climate of enthusiasm for improvement. She has the confidence of staff and parents. Staff said the clear sense of direction she has given them has been a major factor to aid improvement. The associate deputy headteacher has a clear remit to develop the skills of teaching assistants.

Since the previous monitoring inspection three significant changes have had a positive impact on the effectiveness of leadership and management. First, a senior leadership team has been established. It meets regularly and is strongly focused on pupils' progress. Second, the associate headteacher has established a programme of regular meetings with each teacher to discuss their pupils' progress. Consequently, staff's accountability for pupils' achievement is more to the fore. Third, middle management responsibilities have been reallocated. The teachers new to these roles are receiving a good level of support from local authority staff and are attending additional training in order to develop their leadership skills. They value this input and they are beginning to appreciate the extent of their new responsibilities. The change has had most impact in Key Stage 1 where teamwork is now strong. The school's capacity at this level of leadership has improved considerably, though from a very low base.

The school's support staff have devised an electronic system for keeping track of pupils' attainment and progress. This provides a wealth of useful information, for example, comparison of the rates of progress of boys and girls in each class. That said, the system is still under development. At present, it is complex and key information is not always easily accessible for staff. The long-term targets set for pupils do not always reflect the accelerated progress necessary to recover lost ground. Teachers have benefited from training in assessing pupils' work against the National Curriculum and they have a clearer picture of what their pupils can do. Occasionally, however, their assessments are overcautious.

Progress since the last inspection on the areas for improvement:

- Ensure pupils make at least satisfactory progress by setting more rigorous targets and monitoring pupils' progress towards them – satisfactory
- Improve the accuracy of school self-evaluation by leaders and managers in order to take more effective action to tackle weaknesses – good

External support



The school remains dependent on external support, especially the associate headteacher. The local authority's support for the school is now satisfactory. It provided a satisfactory statement of action before the start of term. The local authority and the Greater Manchester Challenge continue to fund work to develop the skills of teachers and middle leaders. The IEB has a sound understanding of the issues facing the school and how they are being tackled. Taken overall, external support is satisfactory.

Priorities for further improvement

- Maintaining the momentum of the drive for improvement by continuing to strengthen the school's own leadership capacity.
- Providing further training for teaching assistants.
- Refining the system for keeping track of pupils' attainment and rates of progress so that key information is readily accessible by class teachers and senior staff.
- Further improving teaching so that:
 - more is of a good or better quality
 - all teachers' assessments of pupils' attainment, against the levels of the National Curriculum, are consistently accurate.