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08 March 2010

Mrs R B Mason
Headteacher
St Patrick's RC Primary School
Livesey Street
Collyhurst
Manchester
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Dear Mrs Mason

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

Following my visit with Sheila Mawer, Additional Inspector, to your school on 04 and 05 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 first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures in October 2009. The monitoring inspection report is attached and the main judgements are set out below.

Progress since being subject to special measures – inadequate.

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, Manchester and the Diocese of Salford.

Yours sincerely

Amraz Ali
Her Majesty's Inspector



Special measures: monitoring of St Patrick's RC Primary School

Report from the first monitoring inspection on 04 and 05 March 2010

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, visited 15 lessons, scrutinised pupils' work books and the school's documents and met with the headteacher, teaching and support staff, pupils, the Chair of the Interim Executive Board (IEB) and a representative of the local authority.

Context

The governing body has very recently been replaced by an IEB which has yet to hold its first formal meeting. One teacher has left the school and two teachers, both senior leaders, are unwell and absent from duty. Two new teachers have been recruited along with a new teaching assistant. The school continues to experience high levels of absence due to the sickness of teaching assistants. On the dates of the inspection one class was being taught by a supply teacher.

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

At the time of the previous inspection attainment across the school was low. Inspection evidence shows that this continues to be the case. That said, attainment in mathematics is slightly stronger, particularly in Year 6. The school has begun to put procedures into place to tackle under-attainment, such as target setting and marking but, as yet, they are not consistently applied or having a strong enough impact on raising achievement. The progress of pupils across the school remains inconsistent and standards remain too low in too many year groups and there is still much work to do in order to tackle the underachievement that remains across the school. A significant minority of pupils are still not making satisfactory progress. The school's systems and procedures for tracking the attainment and progress of pupils have recently been improved and is now computer-based. Teachers say that this is helping them to think more about the progress of individuals and the next steps in their learning. The system has the potential to pinpoint the progress of individuals and particular groups. However, it is a recent development and has yet to be used for this.

Progress since the last inspection on the areas for improvement:

- Raise attainment and improve achievement across the school by ensuring that any underperformance is quickly identified and challenged throughout the school, especially that of higher-ability pupils and of pupils who speak English as an additional language – inadequate.

Other relevant pupil outcomes

Pupils are mostly well behaved in lessons and around the school. Nonetheless, when teaching is dull, some pupils become inattentive and their interest and concentration



wanes. The attendance rate, although improving, remains well below average and the punctuality of some pupils could be better.

The effectiveness of provision

The quality of teaching has not improved and is weaker now than at the previous inspection. Absence of staff has meant that there are more supply staff than before and the quality of teaching is fragile. Teaching ranged from good to inadequate in the observed lessons. Assessment information is not always being used to good effect in enough classes. Planning is variable and does not consistently take into account the wide range of ability in each class. Rarely does planning take into account the pupils who speak English as an additional language. Too often the same work is set for all pupils. More able pupils are not challenged sufficiently and less able pupils do not always complete their tasks because they are too difficult. The support provided for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and pupils who speak English as an additional language is patchy and, as a result, progress is variable. Few of the staff have been trained to support these pupils in the best way to help to accelerate their progress.

While class and group targets are set in some classes, these are often vague and rarely shared or reviewed with pupils in lessons. Very few pupils are able to recall their targets or know how well they are doing and how to improve. Marking remains weak overall, although it has improved in some classes and there are pockets with some good examples of effective marking. Comments tend to be positive and encouraging but there are few clear pointers for improvement. In some classes the legacy of frequent temporary staff is seen in work that has not been marked for several weeks.

Relationships are good and the vast majority of pupils display positive attitudes and good behaviour. In the better teaching there is a purpose and clarity in the learning and questions are used well to extend the learning. Where teaching is less successful, planning is poor, the pace of learning slow and the questioning skills of the staff do not challenge pupils to think hard enough or explain their reasons and opinions.

In the Early Years Foundation Stage Unit the quality of provision is equally variable. Although some good small-group activities were observed, some adult-led tasks do not link closely to children's abilities and do not meet the needs of all. The outdoor area of learning is a particular concern and is not used continuously; resources outdoors are barely adequate and some are not kept clean enough for children to use. Some teaching groups are too large and a key-worker scheme has yet to be established. Some children still move fairly quickly from one activity to another because the resources and organisation are not promoting good learning for all children yet.

Progress since the last inspection on the area for improvement:

- The quality of teaching should be improved so that most lessons are good or better by developing the use of assessment so that planning, questioning and work set are more closely matched to pupils' different levels of skills and ability – inadequate.

The effectiveness of leadership and management

There has been some improvement to the school's procedures for safeguarding. The headteacher, who is the designated teacher for child protection, has attended appropriate training; she and the Chair of the IEB are trained in safer recruitment and some other members of staff have received some child protection training, but this does not include every member of staff. Training records covering child protection are incomplete. The single central record has been improved and is now largely compliant. Although there have been some moves to make the building and grounds safer for pupils, the building presents some challenges and there remain some areas where further improvement is needed. There is not an adequately robust risk assessment in place for the Early Years Foundation Stage Unit.

The headteacher is able to document much effort and work that has been undertaken since the inspection in October 2009, including a great deal of time dealing with ongoing staffing difficulties. However, not all of these actions have been effective in bringing about the desired improvements. There remains much work to be done if the school is to make the expected progress and emerge successfully from special measures. Action plans are generally appropriate and address the most important areas of need. There are examples of planned improvements that have suffered due to the absence of staff. Consequently, actions taken have not been sufficiently robust to ensure that developments, such as in implementing the new marking policy, are actively pursued and realised in all classrooms. Where there have been improvements these remain fragile in some parts of the school. The role of leaders at all levels in monitoring and influencing practice is limited.

There is a clear desire on the part of the headteacher for the school to make rapid improvement and become good. The school's current evaluation of its own performance, specifically the progress being made by pupils, the quality of teaching, the quality of leadership and management and the capacity to improve are too generous. Similarly, some observations of the quality of teaching are too generous and do not always focus on checking that new policies or guidance are being translated into classroom practice. Lesson observations do not currently check the progress being made by the many specific groups within classes, such as the more able or those who speak English as an additional language.

The teaching and support staff recognise the need for the school to improve and they state that they welcome all of the support and training on offer from the local authority. However, some state that they do not feel that they have been provided with the necessary direction and support to move their day-to-day practice forward. They state clearly that they would welcome more support, particularly in the Early



Years Foundation Stage. There is not yet a clear sense of teamwork. Some aspects of the current working arrangements and climate are frustrating teachers and teaching assistants. A particular concern is the arrangement for providing support from teaching assistants. Currently, if one is absent the timetables of many teaching assistants are changed. This is happening frequently and makes planning for teaching and learning difficult.

The Chair of the newly formed IEB has a clear idea of the board's role in moving the school forward but this is a very new development and has not had time to have an impact on any area of the school's work. Given the limited progress since the previous inspection, the over-generous self-evaluation and the ongoing staffing issues, the ability of the school's leadership at the highest level to tackle the areas for improvement and move the school forward is not secure.

Progress since the last inspection on the area for improvement:

- Strengthen leadership and management by: making sure that all requirements for safeguarding are met; improving the rigour of the school's procedures for target setting, analysis and tracking; increasing the involvement of leaders at all levels in monitoring the quality of teaching and its impact on pupils' learning – inadequate.

External support

Support for the school has been satisfactory. Following the last inspection, the local authority produced the required statement of action. On evaluation by HMI, the plan was judged to need amendment. An amended plan was provided at this inspection and includes greater detail, particularly with regard to the personnel involved and timescales for improvement. The local authority has supported the establishment of the recently formed IEB. The local authority has provided staff's time, including from an advanced skills teacher who focused on developing strategies for supporting teachers to meet the needs of pupils who speak English as an additional language.

Priorities for further improvement

- The school, Diocese and the local authority must tackle the areas for improvement identified at the last inspection with greater urgency. In particular they should:
 - remedy the safeguarding issues
 - investigate the reasons for the high levels of absence of staff and review the day-to-day arrangements for dealing with these
 - provide support and development opportunities for staff in the Early Years Foundation Stage.