

CfBT Inspection Services
Suite 22
West Lancashire Investment
Centre
Maple View
White Moss Business Park
Skelmersdale, WN8 9TG

T 0300 123 1231
Text Phone: 0161 6188524
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk
Direct T 01695 566930
Direct F 01695 729320



18 June 2010

Margaret Cunningham
Associate Headteacher
St Margaret Mary's Roman Catholic Primary School
St Margaret's Road
New Moston
Manchester
Greater Manchester
M40 0JE

Dear Mrs Cunningham

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

Following my visit to your school on 16 and 17 June 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 third 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

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

Michael Sheridan
Her Majesty's Inspector

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

Report from the third monitoring inspection on 16 and 17 June 2010

Evidence

The inspector observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the associate headteacher, associate deputy headteacher, staff with leadership responsibilities, teaching assistants, the chair of the Interim Executive Board (IEB) and a representative from the local authority. Informal conversations were also held with a number of parents and pupils.

Context

The substantive headteacher has resigned following a period of ill health. The school continues to be led by an associate headteacher who is at the school for four days a week. In September, the associate headteacher will take up the position of executive headteacher for 12 months. This arrangement will see her attached to the school for around 50% of the time. An IEB continues to carry the responsibility for governance of the school.

An associate deputy headteacher remains with the school until July 2010. A substantive deputy headteacher has been appointed and will take up post in September. One teacher has left the school since the last visit and two new teachers have been appointed and take up their posts in September.

An officer from the local authority continues to support teacher development in school for one morning a week. An advanced skills teacher continues to work in school occasionally but much of this role is now undertaken by the associate deputy headteacher, who is also from the local authority.

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

Achievement is improving as pupils continue to make better progress across the school. The school's tracking system and work in pupils' books show that the gap in performance between boys and girls continues to narrow. In some year groups this gap has been almost eradicated with fewer boys now failing to reach the expected levels. In Year 6, boys have made accelerated progress in mathematics and reading so that their attainment is now much closer to that of girls in the class. In writing, fewer boys than girls are likely to attain in line with age related expectations. However, work in books shows that they are catching up. This is as a result of effective teaching, well chosen resources that appeal more to boys and improved use of data to target specific support.

At the last monitoring visit, inspectors identified a legacy of underachievement in Year 2. Impressive progress in this year group now means that these pupils are predicted to reach standards of attainment that are in line with the national average.

Pupils enjoy their learning and work hard to please their teachers. Pupils say that they are happy with the progress they are making and report that they feel that they are expected to do their best.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- Raise pupils' achievement in English, mathematics and science – Good

The effectiveness of provision

The overall quality of teaching continues to improve. More lessons are now being taught well and fewer lessons have weaknesses. No inadequate teaching was seen. This is having a positive impact on the progress that pupils make. Teachers have settled well into their new classes. Their understanding of pupils' progress and their ability to accurately assess work continues to develop at a good pace. Senior leaders have a clear view of where weaknesses remain in teaching. The systems for developing these teachers' skills are ensuring the quality of their teaching continues to improve. Marking is becoming more proportionate and the existing good practice seen at the last visit remains.

Teaching assistants are making a much improved contribution to learning in classes. This has come about because teachers are now better at planning activities for teaching assistants to lead. An effective programme of training for teaching assistants has further added to their ability to focus on pupils' learning rather than completion of task. As a result, teaching assistants are now clearer about their roles and responsibilities. One teaching assistant summarised the developments when stating, 'I thought my role was about sticking things in books. Now we are helping children's learning.'

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

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

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The associate headteacher and associate deputy headteacher continue to hold an accurate view of where improvements are needed. Together they have continued to

tackle the issues they face with determination and rigour. Middle leaders continue to develop their skills at a sound pace, although their effectiveness as a team is not yet proven. That said, they are beginning to recognise the scope of their roles as leaders. Staff talk very positively about the support middle leaders are giving on a day to day basis.

The school's systems for tracking pupils' progress have been simplified so that all staff can now access these and use them when planning lessons. Middle leaders are beginning to use the resulting information to identify patterns. However, they are yet to demonstrate sufficiently the ability to focus their actions appropriately without the support of senior leaders and local authority guidance. Because they remain focused on the completion of tasks, some middle leaders are yet to develop strategies to evaluate the impact of actions on identified issues.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

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

External support

The school remains dependent on external support. The local authority support has improved and is now good. The support is well managed and negotiated by the associate headteacher. This leads to the support being highly focused on priorities without being overwhelming to staff members. The associate deputy headteacher, who is from the local authority, has established herself in the school and is providing effective daily support and intervention to staff and good quality teaching to pupils. Her impact has been most keenly felt by the teaching assistants. The local authority and the Greater Manchester Challenge continue to fund work to develop the skills of teacher and middle leaders. The IEB continues to have a sound understanding of the issues facing the school. Members have been instrumental in securing the continued availability of the associate headteacher and in the appointment of the substantive deputy headteacher. However, they are yet to develop a clear strategy for securing a substantive headteacher beyond the next academic year.

Priorities for further improvement

- Ensure that the IEB has a feasible strategy to implement a long-term solution to the substantive headteacher position.
- Continue to develop the skills of middle leaders so that they can evaluate their actions against the outcomes for pupils.