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11 June 2010

Mrs Sally Magill  
St John CE Primary School, Kearsley  
Church Road  
Kearsley  
Bolton  
Lancashire  
BL4 8AP

Dear Mrs Magill

Special measures: monitoring inspection of St John CE Primary School,  
Kearsley

Following my visit to your school on 09 and 10 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 second monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures in September 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 – satisfactory.

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 Diocese and the Director of Children's Services for Bolton.

Yours sincerely

Ruth James  
Lead Inspector

Her Majesty's Inspector special measures: monitoring inspection of St John CE Primary School, Kearsley

Report from the second monitoring inspection on 09 and 10 June 2010

## Evidence

The inspector observed the school's work, including seven lessons; scrutinised documents and pupils' work; and met with the headteacher and other staff, a group of pupils, the Chair of the Interim Executive Board (IEB) and a representative from the local authority.

## Context

Since the first monitoring visit the Year 3 teacher has left. Another teacher who had been on long-term sickness absence resigned with effect from the end of May. The school appointed an unqualified student teacher to cover the Year 3 class for the summer term.

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

Standards are improving but there remains some variation across the school. Teachers' assessments for the current Year 6 suggest that the proportion of pupils reaching the expected levels in English and mathematics should be close to average in 2010, which would represent a considerable improvement on the 2009 figures. Standards in Year 5 remain too low. Recent assessment data in writing show a low proportion of boys in line with the level expected for pupils of this age. Standards in mathematics in Year 5 also lag behind age-related expectations. The school's assessment data indicate that slightly below average proportions of Year 2 pupils should reach age-related expectations in reading, writing and mathematics in 2010.

Progress is accelerating but the picture across the school is uneven. The school's assessment data show that progress in Year 6 has improved so that the majority of pupils should make expected progress overall during Key Stage 2. The less able pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities continue to make slower progress, especially in upper Key Stage 2. For the current Year 5 class the school's assessment data show that many pupils are not on track to achieve individual targets by end of Year 6, especially in mathematics.

Progress in the lessons seen was at least satisfactory and occasionally better. In the best lessons, where work is well matched to ability, pupils work productively on suitably challenging tasks and their learning is moved on effectively, aided by helpful interventions from teachers or teaching assistants. Learning is not as rapid when time is spent on work that pupils can already do, the materials in use are not well suited to the task, or pupils have to wait too long to get help or to find out whether

or not they have done something correctly. Overall, progress is not yet rapid enough to counteract the legacy of underachievement resulting from inadequate teaching in the past.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- Raise attainment in all subjects, particularly in writing, to be in line with the national average, through raising the quality of teaching and learning, ensuring that:
  - lessons take full account of pupils' interests, skills and National Curriculum levels
  - pupils extend their writing skills in all curriculum areas
  - pupils extend and develop their information and communication technology (ICT) skills across the curriculum, and use it to extend their learning
  - governors fulfil their roles in monitoring and assessing the impact of initiatives
  - the gap between boys' and girls' attainment is further reduced.
- satisfactory progress.
- Raise attainment for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities by:
  - providing daily targeted support
  - monitoring the impact of support programmes
  - providing challenging activities which meet their needs and interests
- satisfactory progress.

Other relevant outcomes for pupils

Pupils who met the inspector spoke enthusiastically about school. They enjoy lessons and show good attitudes to learning. Many pupils mentioned literacy as a subject that they enjoy and where they feel they learn a lot. Although some still lack confidence they are keen to learn, tackle set tasks diligently and display a willingness to persevere. Behaviour observed in lessons and around school was almost always good. Attendance is improving as a result of the school's work and just exceeds the target.

The effectiveness of provision

Teaching is improving and on this visit teaching was found to be good in over half the lessons observed. No inadequate teaching was seen. Teachers have good relationships with pupils and are supportive and encouraging. Classrooms provide a pleasant learning environment. Teachers' planning is improving. A standard format is in use which ensures that teachers consider the needs of groups of pupils of

different abilities and also those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. However, teachers' skills in identifying appropriate activities for differing abilities varies. Success criteria are shared with pupils and in the better lessons the constant reminders and references to these help pupils to stay focused on them. Visits and activities are being used well to engage interest. One example during the visit was a Year 5 football match which was then used as stimulus material for a literacy exercise.

There are inconsistencies in the extent to which teachers monitor individual pupils' progress in lessons and intervene quickly to ensure that progress is as rapid as possible. There is not yet enough good teaching to ensure that all pupils catch up and make up lost ground.

Although writing skills are used in other curriculum areas, the main focus for their development is through literacy lessons. There are few opportunities for extended pieces of writing in other subjects.

The use of ICT as a teaching tool is improving. Recent purchases of software are helping here. The use of a mathematics program is promoting enthusiasm for the subject and providing a management tool for monitoring progress with specific mathematics skills. Word processing software, including a specialist program, is helping boost confidence and enabling pupils to take pride in their work. However, on occasion, features of word processing programs that highlight errors can be a distraction and slow down pupils' writing as they laboriously erase words a letter at a time and seek to correct them. The use of interactive whiteboards in lessons is hindered because of illumination and visibility problems, but the school is actively seeking ways to overcome this. Pupils are very positive about ICT clubs at lunchtime and after school.

Provision for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is carefully monitored. Individual education plans are in place. These focus on small steps of learning and they are reviewed regularly. Much work has been done to improve the engagement of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and to encourage their enthusiasm for learning, through promoting self-esteem and confidence. The impact of this can be seen in improved attitudes to learning, although academic progress for these pupils often remains slower than for other pupils. In class when pupils are working in groups support for those with special educational needs and/or disabilities is provided both by teaching assistants and at regular intervals by teachers. Various interventions are in place and one-to-one tuition is ongoing for a number of pupils. Teachers are required to include specific references to the ways they will meet the needs of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities in their planning.

There is no clearly defined pattern in terms of boys' and girls' attainment across the school. Where pockets of significant underachievement are identified steps are being

taken to tackle these. For example, the headteacher led an intervention group working with underachieving Year 6 girls in mathematics which has helped to improve their confidence and skills. Strategies to engage and interest Year 5 boys better in writing include using more real-life boy-friendly scenarios, sessions on vocabulary, the use of checklists as reminders and incentives to reach individual targets.

### The effectiveness of leadership and management

The decision to appoint an unqualified student teacher nearing the end of her course contravenes the direction from Ofsted that newly qualified teachers may not be appointed. No reference to Ofsted was made prior to this appointment.

The headteacher continues to show energy and drive in her determination to improve the school. The resignation of the assessment coordinator following a period of sickness absence leaves a gap in the management structure. Following the previous visit senior leaders have focused on improving differentiation to meet the needs of pupils of different abilities. Teachers' planning is carefully monitored to ensure that different work is set for different ability groups. The impact of this on classroom practice is variable but teaching is improving. There is as yet insufficient impact on progress in Year 5. Assessment data are collated and analysed regularly. Meetings about pupils' progress held between class teachers and senior leaders are valuable in ensuring that teachers maintain a focus on the progress of every individual in their classes and seek strategies to support further those who are underachieving.

Subject coordinators continue to develop in their roles. They are becoming more involved in monitoring and evaluation through activities such as planning checks and scrutiny of books. Training in lesson observations has also taken place. However, the impact of their work on progress and standards is inconsistent across the school. Where particular weaknesses have been identified strategies are being developed to tackle them. For example, weaknesses in basic skills in mathematics have led to a recent focus on oral mathematics and multiplication tables.

For pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities systems are in place to map provision and these also help staff to monitor progress but these pupils are still making slower progress than others, particularly in upper Key Stage 2.

The IEB continues to meet regularly and to monitor the progress of the school very closely.

Leadership and management overall are improving, but are not yet having a consistent impact in terms of raising achievement across the whole school.

## External support

External support is good. The local authority continues to support the school in a variety of ways. Advisers and consultants continue to provide guidance. The local authority human resources department has assisted with staffing issues. Greater Manchester Challenge has also provided valuable support including that through a link with another school. Staff from the partner school, including the headteacher, have provided advice, support and mentoring on a range of issues. This work has included support in developing the management skills of subject coordinators.

## Priorities for further improvement

- Implement effective support and intervention strategies for underachieving pupils in Year 5, especially in mathematics, to ensure that they reach the levels they are capable of by the end of Year 6.
- Clarify leadership roles and responsibilities quickly to ensure that the school is well positioned for the next academic year.