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16 April 2010

Mr Michael Mellin  
Headteacher  
Well Lane Primary School  
Well Lane  
Tranmere  
Birkenhead  
CH42 5PF

Dear Mr Mellin

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Well Lane Primary School

Following my visit with Jennifer Platt, Additional Inspector, to your school on 14 and 15 April 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 December 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.

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 Wirral.

Yours sincerely

Brian Padgett  
Her Majesty's Inspector

Special measures: monitoring of Well Lane Primary School

Report from the first monitoring inspection on 14 and 15 April 2010

## Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, staff, parents and carers, a governor and representatives from the local authority.

## Context

Since the last inspection one teacher has resigned. No new appointments have been made. Instead, the deputy headteacher has increased her teaching commitment.

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

Eleven lessons were observed during the visit. Although pupils made good or satisfactory progress in the majority of lessons, pupils made inadequate progress in four of the lessons observed. This represents too high a proportion of ineffective teaching and learning. The school's ability to assess the levels at which pupils are working has improved significantly. Accurate assessments of pupils' progress over time are now being made. These generally indicate that pupils across all groups of ability are not making the gains in knowledge, skills and understanding they need to make, although better progress is being made by Year 2 pupils and by the oldest pupils in Years 5 and 6. Records and observation suggest that children in the Early Years Foundation Stage (Nursery and Reception) make good progress, often from very low starting points. However, most do not reach the early learning goals that are desirable for children when they begin the National Curriculum in Year 1. Throughout the school, pupils continue to enjoy school life. Children are settled particularly well in the Early Years Foundation Stage unit. Parents and carers with children in these classes hold the quality of what is provided in high regard. The school's predictions for the national end-of-year tests and assessments at Years 2 and 6 are for low attainment. In 2009 pupils' results in English and mathematics at Year 6 were above the government's minimum targets for the first time in the school's recent history. This is unlikely to be repeated in 2010, according to the school's data. Low levels of attainment in reading, writing and mathematics are also expected at Year 2. This is particularly worrying in reading, where only a quarter of pupils are expected to reach the levels expected of seven-year-olds. The concern is that without good reading skills, pupils will not be able to gain fully from the curriculum in Key Stage 2.

Progress since the last inspection the area for improvement:

- Raise standards in English, mathematics and science – inadequate

## Other relevant outcomes for pupils

The behaviour of the great majority of pupils is good. They are keen to learn and get on well with each other. However, within each class, a small number of pupils have complex social and behavioural difficulties that make it difficult for them to control their behaviour. On occasions, their behaviour disrupts the learning of others as the attention of teachers and teaching assistants is diverted from their planned work. Attendance continues to be problematic. The school has redoubled its efforts to emphasise the importance of attendance with all its pupils and it is working very closely with other agencies and directly with the families concerned. It is too early to comment on the effectiveness of these measures. At the time of the visit attendance was very low, at 91%.

Progress since the last inspection on the area for improvement:

- Improve attendance – inadequate

## The effectiveness of provision

The quality of the teaching observed ranged from outstanding to inadequate. Although the balance of the teaching's quality was towards the good, too much inadequate teaching was observed. When the teaching was ineffective, the main issues were that the lessons did not accurately meet the learning needs of pupils or that the curriculum content was not made sufficiently relevant for pupils. The first weakness was related to the ineffective use of the new assessments of pupils' attainment, the second to the creativity with which teachers planned their lessons. However, there was sufficient good and better teaching observed to demonstrate conclusively that teachers can prepare and teach lessons that interest and motivate pupils and that meet their learning needs well.

Particular challenges for teachers are the very wide range of ability and the range of pupils' learning needs within each class. The number of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is far higher than is seen in a typical primary classroom, up to a half of all pupils in some year groups. Some pupils are highly capable and have need of support to achieve their best. Others have complex social and behavioural needs. When such pupils are unable to cope, they require intensive support. The school deploys its staff, teachers and teaching assistants effectively, in general, to meet the needs of different groups. However, observations suggest that although supported groups make good progress, groups without support do less well. This is a source of frustration to teachers and teaching assistants, who recognise the difficulty of meeting such a wide range of learning needs but who are not clear how the situation can be resolved.

Little progress has been made in meeting the learning needs of children entering Key Stage 1. Assessments of their stages of learning and development indicate that many are not ready to work in more formal ways. However, the school has not yet

found a solution as to how it can adapt the way it works in Key Stage 1 to meet the needs of the pupils while providing their statutory entitlement to the National Curriculum for pupils of this age. This remains an urgent priority, as many pupils continue to leave Key Stage 1 ill-equipped to benefit from the curriculum in Key Stage 2.

Progress since the last inspection on the areas for improvement:

- Improve the quality of teaching to a consistently good or better standard – inadequate
- Improve the curriculum opportunities in each key stage – inadequate

The effectiveness of leadership and management

The school's arrangements for safeguarding pupils and for child protection now meet statutory requirements.

Some aspects of leadership and management show improvement. The deputy headteacher is providing a good example in the drive to improve teaching quality. The work on assessment has resulted in the school having an accurate record of the levels of attainment of each pupil in English and mathematics. It has, therefore, an accurate basis on which to measure future progress for individuals, classes and for the school as a whole. It is at an early stage in using this information effectively, although it has begun the process of making teachers accountable for the progress pupils make over the year. The school is making closer links with parents and carers and better use of its home-school development worker. It is making more effective use of children's services in the local authority to develop multi-agency solutions to the issues faced by pupils and families. However, the leadership team faces significant challenges. The morale of staff is low. Staff are fully committed to the school and its pupils but they have lost confidence in themselves and in their ability to influence improvement. If the school is to work independently of external support, the confidence of staff must be restored by the school's leaders and managers.

Progress since the last inspection on the areas for improvement:

- Build on the school's capacity to work independently of external support by improving the effectiveness of leadership and management at all levels – inadequate
- Ensure that safeguarding and child protection arrangements comply with current statutory requirements – satisfactory

External support

The local authority has worked quickly and effectively with the school's leadership team and governing body to produce and implement a comprehensive action plan of good quality, with appropriate challenge and support, to tackle to areas for improvement identified in the last inspection. The local authority is addressing the single issue in their statement of action deemed necessary in addition to what was

proposed: to inform parents and carers about actions planned for the school. The headteacher has had, and continues to receive, good support for his leadership role from experienced mentors provided by the authority. The governing body has been strengthened by the addition of experienced governors with specialist skills. It is too early for the impact of the package of support to be seen. However, the local authority has shown a willingness to support the leadership team in raising the morale and confidence of staff.

#### Priorities for further improvement

- In the drive to raise standards, focus on improving reading in the Early Years Foundation Stage and in Key Stage 1.
- Revisit how the school meets pupils' varied learning needs. In particular, consider how the wide range of learning needs of pupils can be met within lessons.
- Adjust the curriculum in Key Stage 1 to take better account of pupils' stages of learning and development.
- Raise the morale and confidence of staff.