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11 December 2010

Miss Fenlon  
St Mary and St John Junior and Infant School  
Beaufort Road  
Erdington  
Birmingham  
B23 7NB

Dear Miss Fenlon

**Special measures: monitoring inspection of St Mary and St John Junior and Infant School**

Following my visit to your school on 8 December 2010, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings.

The inspection was the fourth monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in June 2009. The full list of the areas for improvement which were identified during that inspection are set out in the annex to this letter. The monitoring inspection report is attached and the main judgements are set out below.

Progress since being subject to special measures – **good**

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 Governing Body, the Diocese and the Director of Children's Services for Birmingham.

Yours sincerely

Ceri Morgan  
Her Majesty's Inspector

## **Annex**

### **The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in June 2009**

#### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Raise standards and increase the rate of pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics across the school.
- Improve the quality of teaching throughout the school so that it is consistently good or better by ensuring pupils' differing learning needs are met.
- Ensure the school curriculum promotes enjoyment and achievement and better matches the learning needs and interests of all pupils.
- Make sure that leaders and managers, including governors, rigorously monitor and evaluate the work of the school in order to bring about rapid improvement.

## **Special measures: monitoring of St Mary and St John Junior and Infant School**

### **Report from the fourth monitoring inspection on 8 December 2010**

#### **Evidence**

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, the senior leadership team, the inclusion co-ordinator, pupils, the Chair of the Governing Body, representatives from the local authority and the National Leaders in Education who are currently supporting the school. Inspectors observed 19 lessons and considered the responses from 65 questionnaires completed by parents and carers.

#### **Context**

The school continues to undergo significant staffing changes. Since the last monitoring inspection, five new teachers have started work and a new deputy headteacher, yet to start working in the school, has been appointed. The governing body has completed its review and is now a smaller body of 10 members. The number of pupils on roll has stabilised at around 390.

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

Standards of attainment in reading writing and mathematics continue to improve but remain low. In the 2010 national tests, by age 11, 63% achieved the required level in English and 70% in mathematics. The number reaching the higher levels was disappointingly low and the school does not fully meet the needs of more able pupils. Despite this, the quantity of work produced, handwriting, sentence construction and basic number skills are improving in all classes. The results achieved represent the best in the last four years.

The progress being made by most pupils is now close to that expected nationally but with some significant variation in the performances of groups of pupils in school. Groups that make satisfactory progress include pupils in the early stages of learning English as an additional language, those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who are entitled to free school meals. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage make good progress. Pupils from White British backgrounds make progress that is significantly lower than expected nationally. There is significant difference in the progress of girls compared to boys, and boys' literacy skills remain a concern. Pupils in the care of the local authority make low progress compared to their peers. These variations are a direct consequence of the improving rate of progress of some pupils rather than an overall decline. All pupils are now making better progress than at the last visit. Standards of writing remain below those for reading and targets for improving this are too low.

Pupils now enjoy school and are very keen to learn. They say lessons are much more interesting and show good attitudes to work. They take a pleasure in tackling challenging lesson content and, in lessons, behaviour is good. In particular they show consideration and respect towards each other, especially when discussing their work together. The pupils themselves say that 'more of us now put our hands up to take part'.

Progress since the last monitoring inspection on the areas for improvement:

- raise standards and increase the rate of pupils' progress in reading, writing and mathematics across the school – satisfactory

### **Other relevant pupil outcomes**

Behaviour is satisfactory overall but better in the more exciting lessons. Politeness and consideration towards others are commonplace despite occasional challenge by a few boys. This is well managed by teachers and support staff, and examples of bullying are in decline. There have been no exclusions this term.

Attendance is now satisfactory at 94%. This is a considerable improvement on previous levels and reflects the school's effectiveness in this area. Reminders in weekly newsletters, and a mix of rewards and referrals to the Educational Welfare Officers, where appropriate, demonstrate the importance the school attaches to high attendance. Again, the school have had some success with individual cases and are now turning their attention to the 22 pupils who show persistently low attendance levels.

The improved progress being made, and better attendance and punctuality mean pupils are now satisfactorily prepared for their next stage of education.

### **The effectiveness of provision**

The quality of teaching continues to improve. No inadequate teaching was observed during the visit and around half was good. Particular strengths include detailed planning, an attention to meeting pupils' particular needs and greater challenge and pace. Effective use of relationships and careful modelling of good practice is routine. The quality of marking is especially strong now with a thoughtful mix of 'pink pen' marking which identifies next steps and targets alongside 'green ink' comments for success. Pupils are responding well to this level of detail and know their own mini targets which they take very seriously. The use of assessment is, thus, improving although teachers do not always use questioning accurately enough to identify any misunderstanding. As yet there are few examples of outstanding teaching.

The curriculum has been significantly improved since September. It is now based on stimulating themes and a programme of visits which make it more interesting and

appropriate. Recently, for example, pupils have enjoyed visits to the Beatles Museum and a Viking Village. These visits are then used to improve standards of literacy. As a response to low standards of boys' writing, some 'boy friendly' writing opportunities are now included. The 'Dino Day' in which teams of pupils tried to investigate what story lay behind the discovery of some 'bones' is a good example of how the curriculum is now much better matched to pupil needs. As a consequence pupil progress is improving. A strong spiritual strand, which pupils enjoy, remains well embedded in the provision.

The contribution made by teaching assistants is emerging as a strength. Sensitive help and questioning is evident throughout. This is helping pupils with special educational needs to receive better support. Pupils who are in the early stages of learning English as an additional language also get support at times from assistants who speak their first language.

Progress since the last monitoring inspection on the areas for improvement:

- improve the quality of teaching throughout the school so that it is consistently good or better by ensuring pupils' differing learning needs are met – **good**
  
- ensure the school curriculum promotes enjoyment and achievement and better matches the learning needs and interests of all pupils – **good**

### **The effectiveness of leadership and management**

The leadership in school continues to undergo change. However, the work of the Headteacher continues to be outstanding. She has an increasingly secure vision for the future and manages change well. The imaginative approach to recent curriculum development allied to crisp analysis of strengths and weaknesses is an example of this successful approach. She is supported well in this change by an increasingly effective senior leadership team which shows an honest and accurate view of the schools' effectiveness. Members of the team monitor the performance of teaching well by a weekly planning scrutiny. Paired lesson observations ensure consistent lesson evaluations whilst also increasing the skills of the observers, hence extending the expertise in judging the quality of the school's work. Teachers are responding well to this as the school staff develops a closer working team approach where mentoring is supportive but demanding. This team have more change to go through, however, with the imminent arrival of the new deputy headteacher.

Governors are fully involved and appropriately challenging. There is no doubt they are keen to continue the improvement, and are supportive of the school and the community whilst maintaining an objective view of standards. The Catholic ethos is strong and respected by all. This is reflected in increasingly effective strategic planning. Although all aspects of the school improvement plan are appropriate there

is scope for some increase in the attainment targets set by the school. The capacity to improve is good.

The school surveyed the views of parents and carers during this monitoring visit. Of the 65 replies, the majority were positive and appreciate recent improvements. There were a few concerns about behaviour outside of lessons, and car parking arrangements, but many also singled out the quality of leadership for praise.

Progress since the last monitoring inspection on the areas for improvement:

- make sure that leaders and managers, including governors, rigorously monitor and evaluate the work of the school in order to bring about rapid improvement - **good**

### **External support**

The external support provided to the school by both the National Leaders in Education and the Local Authority is good. It is appropriately reviewed and increasingly directed to identifying strong classroom practice. The work of the external Advanced Skills Teachers is a strong driver in improving teaching. There is however now an appropriate decline in the amount of the time given to external support as the school strives to become self sufficient.

### **Priorities for further improvement**

- Improve the quality of questioning by teachers to improve assessment.
- Use the curriculum changes to secure outstanding teaching by fostering high challenge, ambitious activity and establish open and genuinely challenging expectation, especially for the more able.
- Review the performance targets the school sets itself to increase expectation further especially in literacy.