

CfBT Inspection Services  
Suite 22  
West Lancs Investment Centre  
Maple View  
Skelmersdale  
WN8 9TG

T 0300 1231231  
Text Phone: 0161 6188524  
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk  
[www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

**Direct T** 01695 566 937  
**Direct F** 01695 729320  
**Direct email:**  
jsimmons@cfbt.com



27 January 2012

Mrs Young  
Headteacher  
St Stephen's Church of England Primary School  
Robinson Street  
Blackburn  
Lancashire  
BB1 5PE

Dear Mrs Young

**Special measures: monitoring inspection of St Stephen's Church of England Primary School**

Following my visit with Peter Jones, Additional Inspector, to your school on 25 and 26 January 2012, 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 third monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in November 2010. The full list of the areas for improvement which were identified during that inspection is 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 – inadequate

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – 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 the Governing Body and the Strategic Director Families Health and Wellbeing Children's Services, Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council.

Yours sincerely

Adrian Guy  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

January 2012



## **Annex**

### **The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in November 2010**

- Raise pupils' attainment and accelerate their progress by:
  - ensuring that all teachers use assessment effectively to plan learning for pupils of all ability levels in Key Stage 2
  - providing higher levels of challenge for more-able pupils throughout the school
  - ensuring opportunities for pupils to contribute to their learning by developing their speaking and listening skills
  - maximising the effectiveness of teaching assistants by extending current good practice more widely.
  
- Ensure leaders drive school improvement with a greater sense of urgency by:
  - using more accurate benchmarks for measuring pupils' outcomes in order to evaluate the school's performance
  - identifying sharp and measurable success criteria for school development within tighter timescales
  - providing training for members of the governing body so that their responsibilities can be fully and effectively implemented.

## **Special measures: monitoring of St Stephen's Church of England Primary School**

### **Report from the third monitoring inspection on 25 and 26 January 2012**

#### **Evidence**

Inspectors observed the school's work and carried out lesson observations, some of which were conducted jointly with the headteacher. They listened to some pupils read and scrutinised a sample of work in their books. They met with the headteacher, members of the school's leadership team, teachers, members of the governing body, consultants working with the school and a representative from the local authority.

#### **Context**

Since the previous visit there have been significant changes in staffing. Four teachers, four teaching assistants and a seconded senior teacher have left the school. The school is reorganising its management structure and has appointed a substantive headteacher, as well as four temporary members of teaching staff until permanent appointments can be made. Currently, one member of staff is on long-term absence and two teachers have joined the senior leadership team on a temporary basis.

#### **Achievement of pupils at the school**

Since the last visit, the school's tracking information shows that pupils' levels of attainment are not improving strongly enough to make up for previous underperformance. The school is currently not on track to meet its targets and in some year groups the proportion of pupils reaching expected levels has declined. Although some of the dip in pupils' attainment may be explained by more-rigorous assessment, the inspectors' observations of lessons and scrutiny of pupils' work confirm that measures put in place by the school have not had the desired impact on pupils' achievement, particularly in writing. For example, in English lessons teachers' assessments of pupils' learning often miss important misconceptions. As a result, feedback to pupils and teachers' planning fail to address issues which are impeding pupils' progress.

In the Early Years Foundation Stage, the school has established clear systems which show that children are making progress in most areas of learning, although their progress in aspects of creative development and knowledge and understanding of the world is limited. Leaders are aware that the attainment of boys lags behind that of girls.

Currently, the school does not have an accurate overview of the attainment of pupils who have special educational needs. Consequently, leaders and managers are unable to keep a check on these pupils' progress.

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

- raise pupils' attainment and accelerate their progress – inadequate

### **The quality of teaching**

Where there has been good teaching in the school it has remained strong. Here teachers' questioning is focused and they maintain a good pace ensuring pupils are engaged. However, where teaching is weaker there has been not enough improvement in the quality of lessons to result in the better progress of pupils. This is because:

- teachers' subject knowledge is underdeveloped, particularly in writing, and on-going assessments in lessons focus on a limited range of criteria while other misconceptions which hold back pupils' learning are not identified and addressed
- marking of pupils' work is inconsistent and does not identify the next steps to improve pupils' learning accurately
- too often in lessons there is an over focus on teacher direction and too much time is spent on listening to the teacher talking, which limits opportunities for pupils to be independent, work for sustained periods and make better progress
- tasks and activities planned for pupils do not accurately meet their needs or have limited challenge and teachers do not adjust lessons and plans to ensure pupils are moving on in their learning with sufficient pace.

Although the school has put in place a significant number of interventions to address underachievement, their effectiveness is varied. Observations show pupils engage well and are keen to learn, however, opportunities for identifying and dealing with pupils' errors and misunderstanding are sometimes missed and the focus on an identified area of learning is not maintained. The learning environment in the Early Years Foundation Stage has improved and children's learning is being regularly observed and records kept. In the rest of the school, the assessment of pupils' learning is developing but now requires greater accuracy.

### **Behaviour and safety of pupils**

The school has made concerted efforts to address the attendance of pupils and this has resulted in a marked improvement. In lessons and around school pupils' behaviour continues to be a positive feature, although in lessons where there is an over focus on listening to the teacher talk, pupils' behaviour tends to be passive and their progress slows. Systems for ensuring staff are checked and cleared to work with pupils continue to be well administered. The school continues to have no recorded incidents of bullying and racism, however, aspects of monitoring all forms of bullying are underdeveloped.

### **The quality of leadership in and management of the school**

Since the previous visit the school has resolved the issue of leadership and a substantive headteacher is now in place. There have been significant changes in staffing, particularly at senior levels. Two teachers have temporarily joined the senior leadership team. They share the headteacher's vision and are keen to drive further improvement. This has increased the capacity to secure further improvement.

Members of the governing body are now aware of the milestones and timelines required for improvement and have a clearer picture of the progress the school is making. Their commitment to improvement is demonstrated in their improved attendance and ability to ask challenging questions and hold the school to account. The school has appointed two part-time teachers to coordinate the provision for pupils with special educational needs. They have quickly established what needs to be done and have developed suitable plans, however, it is too soon to assess the extent to which this is improving outcomes for pupils. There has been a strong improvement in the provision and development of assessment systems in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

Senior leaders' evaluation of the school's progress is honest. However, together with the findings from a range of monitoring activities, evaluations are not sharp enough and there is insufficient follow up to drive improvement at the required pace. Although improvements in leadership and management since the last visit are satisfactory, there has been insufficient improvement in the progress and attainment of pupils. Consequently, the overall progress since the previous visit and since the school was placed in special measures is inadequate.

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

- ensure leaders drive school improvement with a greater sense of urgency – satisfactory

### **External support**

The school has continued to benefit from a range of support from local authority staff focusing on the teaching of phonics (letters and the sounds they make), mathematics and leadership and management. The local authority adviser has brokered the secondment of the special educational needs coordinator from a local school and supported the governing body in chairing the regular round-table discussions to monitor the improvements at the school. The overall support for the school is reducing appropriately as the school is developing its own capacity for improvement.