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22 March 2012

Mr J Lawless  
Acting Headteacher  
Stockton Heath Primary School  
West Avenue  
Stockton Heath  
Warrington  
Cheshire  
WA4 6HX

Dear Mr Lawless

### **Special measures: monitoring inspection of Stockton Heath Primary School**

Following my visit to your school on 20 and 21 March 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 second monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in June 2011. 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 – 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 Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Warrington.

Yours sincerely

Margot D'Arcy  
Additional inspector

January 2012



## **Annex**

### **The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in June 2011**

- Accelerate progress and raise attainment in writing and mathematics in Key Stage 2 by:
  - using information about the progress of different groups effectively to set challenging targets for improvement
  - making staff accountable for the progress pupils make
  - ensuring all staff provide work that builds on pupils' prior learning in order to improve their achievement.
  
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning by:
  - raising teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve
  - ensuring teachers use assessment information consistently to set work that effectively challenges different groups, especially the more able
  - improving feedback and marking so that pupils are clear about the next steps in their learning.
  
- Improve the quality of leadership and management by:
  - delegating leadership and management responsibilities among staff and ensuring that all leaders are fully involved in promoting school improvement
  - ensuring self-evaluation is accurate and provides a firm basis for long-term planning for improvement
  - rigorously monitoring teaching and learning to provide a clear picture of their quality throughout the school.
  
- Improve the behaviour of pupils in the designated unit by:
  - developing and embedding robust procedures for managing behaviour so that pupils and staff are safe at all times and learning can proceed without distractions.
  
- Improve provision and pupils' progress in the designated unit by:
  - improving the expertise of staff in meeting the specific needs of individual pupils
  - ensuring that ongoing assessments of individual pupil's progress are rigorous so that specific next steps in learning can be set.

## **Special measures: monitoring inspection of Stockton Heath Primary School**

### **Report from the second monitoring inspection on 20 and 21 March 2012**

#### **Evidence**

The inspector observed the school's work, including 11 lessons or parts of lessons, three of which were conducted jointly with members of the school's senior leadership team. Meetings were held with the acting headteacher and deputy headteacher, members of the governing body, pupils from Key Stage 2, a representative from the local authority and the new acting headteacher for the summer term. The inspector analysed pupils' work and a range of school documentation.

#### **Context**

Since the last monitoring inspection, three teachers and the substantive headteacher have resigned; one teacher remains on long-term absence. Two teachers have been appointed on a temporary basis. The acting headteacher will leave at the end of this term in line with his agreed two-term secondment. Another acting headteacher has been seconded for the summer term. The process of appointing a substantive headteacher is underway and this appointment is anticipated for the start of the autumn term 2012.

The designated provision for pupils with autistic spectrum disorder was closed by the local authority after the inspection of June 2011. Consequently, the two final areas for improvement in the annex to this letter, which relate specifically to the designated provision, are now not applicable and are not reported on.

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

The school has set challenging targets for pupils' achievement and is making effective use of data from an improved assessment system to track pupils' progress. This data still needs to be moderated to be certain of its accuracy, but the system has good potential to inform action to improve pupils' achievement. The data shows that since the last monitoring inspection fewer pupils are making inadequate progress in reading, writing and mathematics and more pupils are making accelerated progress. This is the case in virtually all year groups at Key Stage 2. Nevertheless, considerable variability exists and the picture is better in reading and writing than in mathematics. The improvements indicated by the school's data were, for the most part, reflected in the observations of pupils' learning and progress in lessons. However, the variability was also evident and was directly attributable to the variable quality of teaching. While there have been some improvements to teaching and more pupils are now on track to make at least the expected rate of progress, the proportions continuing to underachieve and failing to make the rapid progress needed remains too high.

The school's effective use of assessment data is enabling leaders to track the progress of different groups of pupils. This is supporting staff accountability and informing action to address underachievement. A good example of this is the high quality, daily mathematics intervention for more-able pupils in Year 5. Ensuring that the more able pupils reach their potential rightly remains a high priority. Teachers are much more focused on providing challenging work for these pupils, although with variable success. The inconsistency in teaching quality also results in variable progress for other groups of pupils, such as those who have special educational needs. While improvements have occurred, the most significant factor in promoting or limiting the progress of all groups of pupils is the quality of teaching they receive. This is also the case at Key Stage 1. However, some good progress is occurring at this key stage in reading, writing and mathematics. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage continue to achieve well.

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

- accelerate progress and raise attainment in writing and mathematics in Key Stage 2 – satisfactory

### **The quality of teaching**

The quality of teaching remains inconsistent and inadequate teaching is still a feature of the school's provision at both key stages. However, the proportion of inadequate teaching has reduced since the previous monitoring inspection. During this monitoring inspection, just less than half the teaching observed was good and a small amount was outstanding; just over a quarter was inadequate. Throughout the school, teachers' planning has improved and reflects the differentiated work and/or support needed to allow individuals and different groups of pupils to make progress. Despite this, some teachers are not successfully converting the planning into good practice. Features of inadequate teaching, which limited pupils' learning included:

- ineffective organisation and the provision of work that did not meet the range of pupils' needs
- ineffective planning for and use of support staff
- unclear explanations, which reflected limited understanding of pupils' stage conceptual development and resulted in many being confused
- slow pace and unnecessary repetition of work, resulting in pupils' lack of interest, engagement and application.

By contrast, good and better teaching challenged and motivated pupils and made use of a range of strategies to maximise learning. This included improvements to marking and ongoing assessment to address pupils' misconceptions and inform them of how to improve. Strategies to include pupils in evaluating their own work have improved. A very good example was seen in a Year 2 writing lesson where pupils of all abilities conscientiously checked their own work and then their partner's to ensure that it included all the success criteria they had been made aware of to enable them to meet the lesson objectives and personal improvement targets. Some of the best teaching was seen in a Year 5 mathematics lesson for more-able pupils. Here, pupils were totally engrossed in highly challenging, multi-

step, investigations extending over the course of a week. Pupils used school floor plans and asset registers to calculate the perimeters and areas of different rooms to work out the cost of various priced floor coverings and skirting, including calculating percentage discounts. Excellent opportunities were provided for pupils to work cooperatively and the teacher expertly managed her input, providing the optimal balance of support and challenge. Time was used to maximum effect, with an additional extension task in the plenary, which required pupils to calculate the cost of various quantities of 'Notebooks' from different companies to write purchase proposals to the school governors. In this lesson, all pupils' learning progressed rapidly. Pupils relished the challenges presented and fully appreciated the purpose and usefulness of the work to 'real life'

The impact of support staff continues to vary from good to inadequate, as does the way in which teachers use these staff. Resources are being enhanced to support the development of pupils' skills in information and communication technology (ICT), but there is variability in the extent to which teachers use ICT to support teaching and learning. Some very effective use of 'netbooks' occurred in a Year 4 design and technology lesson enabling pupils to design book covers. In some lessons, teaching and learning were impeded because the poor picture quality of some electronic whiteboards.

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

- improve the quality of teaching and learning – satisfactory

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

Pupils continue to behave well. They show excellent attitudes and application when they are motivated by challenging work presented in ways that stimulate their evident eagerness to learn. Generally, pupils remain respectful, compliant and well behaved even when the work does not engage their interest or is too easy or too difficult. In these situations, pupils' concentration sometimes drifts and they do not apply themselves fully to their work.

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

Some good improvements have been made in this area since the previous monitoring inspection. More frequent and rigorous monitoring to evaluate the quality of teaching and learning have provided senior leaders with a clearer and more accurate picture of strengths and weaknesses and enhanced school self-evaluation. This was clearly evident in the paired lesson observations with senior leaders during this inspection and the decisive actions leaders have taken to improve teaching. The school is working hard, and with some success, to this end. The impact of the additional training for all teachers and specific, intensive, support for some is beginning to pay off. However, not all teaching staff have improved as swiftly as is needed or as might be expected in response to the good quality support that has been provided. There school is aware that where teaching remains inadequate or has only improved to a satisfactory level this continues to prevent pupils from making up lost ground and achieving as well as they should. The improved assessment system and analyses of the more detailed information this provides is being used effectively to identify



gaps in learning and target action for improvement. Refinements, for example, to identify variations between classes within the same year group, are imminent and are intended to provide even greater opportunity to tailor actions for improvement. Issues that were restricting the formation of a more productive senior leadership team have been resolved. Similarly, much of the staff resistance to assuming subject responsibilities has been overcome. While these aspects are still in the early stages of development, they reflect a firmer foundation for the school to build its capacity to improve than was evident at the last monitoring inspection.

The governing body has a clear understanding of its role. Members' support for the school remains resolute, tempered by appropriate and judicious challenge to promote school improvement and better outcomes for the pupils. An example of the increased involvement of the governing body and use of governor expertise is the work of a small group, with some teaching staff, to develop and enhance the school's curriculum, with a view to implementing this at the start of the autumn term. The governing body has also been strengthened by the addition of some new governors with expertise in school improvement.

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

- improve the quality of leadership and management – satisfactory

### **External support**

The quality and impact of the external support provided by the local authority are good. The regular visits from the School Improvement Partner and other local authority personnel have been extremely beneficial in supporting and validating senior leaders' monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning. Good support has been provided for school leaders and managers with regard to planning brokered support and reviewing its impact on improving the quality of teaching and the development of subject coordination. The local authority has undertaken a rigorous and helpful review of the school's work and its human resources department have provided good advice on staffing issues.