

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

T 0300 123 1231  
Text Phone: 0161 618 8524  
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk  
[www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

**Direct T** 01695 566932  
**Direct F** 01695 729320  
**Direct email:**  
hcarroll@cfbt.com



5 July 2012

Mrs C Smith  
Headteacher  
The Holy Spirit Catholic Primary School  
Cotterill  
Halton Brook  
Runcorn  
Cheshire  
WA7 2NL

Dear Mrs Smith

### **Special measures: monitoring inspection of The Holy Spirit Catholic Primary School**

Following my visit to your school on 3 and 4 July 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 October 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, the Director of Shrewsbury Diocese and the Director of Children's Services for Halton.

Yours sincerely

Joanne Olsson  
Her Majesty's Inspector

January 2012



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

## **Annex**

### **The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place on 11 October 2011**

- Raise attainment and accelerate the progress of all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, by:
  - setting out appropriately challenging and ambitious expectations for pupils' progress and attainment
  - ensuring, through rigorous and effective monitoring, that the quality of teaching is consistently good or better and that learning is supported by an appropriate pace in all lessons
  - ensuring that the curriculum is designed effectively to support rapid improvements in pupils' basic skills
  - improving consistency in the quality of marking, so that it always gives pupils clear guidance on the next steps they need to take to improve their work.
  
- Raise attainment and improve the progress made by children in the Early Years Foundation Stage by ensuring that provision in the Reception class is sharply focused on learning.
  
- Improve the quality and effectiveness of strategic planning for improvement, by defining precise success criteria in the school development plan, so that the impact of actions can be measured accurately to provide an overview of the school's performance.
  
- Improve pupils' attendance.

## **Special measures: monitoring inspection of The Holy Spirit Catholic Primary School**

### **Report from the second monitoring inspection on 3 and 4 July 2012**

#### **Evidence**

Her Majesty's Inspector observed the school's work, scrutinised documents, pupils' books and information on pupils' attainment and progress. She observed seven lessons led by six teachers. Additional visits were made to classrooms to evaluate the teaching of reading. Meetings were held with senior leaders and managers, staff, pupils, members of the governing body, a representative from the local authority, the local leader of education and a group of four parents and carers.

#### **Context**

Since the previous monitoring inspection two temporary assistant headteachers have been appointed and the leadership team has been restructured.

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

Pupils' rising aspirations and pride in their work are reflected in their much improved work books. They are becoming resilient learners who are willing to review and improve their work in order to meet their targets. In a Year 4 and 5 English lesson, pupils displayed high levels of concentration as they continued a piece of narrative writing. Many used complex punctuation and a wide range of vocabulary to make their story interesting and to meet the goals set by the teacher. Inspection evidence confirms learning such as this is becoming typical on a day-to-day basis. Pupils say they have to work harder. They are relishing increased levels of challenge and thoroughly enjoying their learning.

A considerable number of pupils are making better than expected progress from their starting points in reading, writing and mathematics. This means previous underachievement is being eradicated and more pupils are working at the levels expected for their age. Nonetheless, there is too much variation in achievement and some pupils are not reaching their full potential. Consequently, attainment remains low in some classes. As pupils' achievement improves, gaps between different groups are emerging. Boys and pupils known to be eligible for free school meals achieve less well than their peers. Too few pupils are working at the higher levels because more-able pupils are not always sufficiently challenged. Disabled pupils and pupils with special educational needs are making stronger progress than at the previous monitoring visit. This is because activities are better matched to their individual targets.

Pupils' achievement in writing is improving because gaps in pupils' skills are being tackled vigorously and pupils have more opportunities to write independently for sustained periods

of time. Handwriting skills are much improved and pupils are beginning to use appropriate punctuation and grammar in their work. They are gaining a better grasp of number and calculation because the mathematics curriculum is no longer reliant on published worksheets. Nonetheless, too many pupils have weak spelling skills because they have insufficient knowledge of key spelling rules.

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

- raise attainment and accelerate the progress of all pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities – satisfactory

### **The quality of teaching**

A whole-school understanding of effective teaching strategies coupled with focussed professional development means more teaching is good on a day-to-day basis. Teachers' expectations have risen so that poor quality work is no longer accepted as the best pupils can do. Lesson planning is stronger because greater account is taken of pupils' needs while adaptations to the curriculum mean teachers are more effective in tackling gaps in pupils' basic skills. Although teachers plan to meet the needs of more-able pupils, the tasks they provide do not always have the appropriate amount of challenge. Teaching is improving strongly because teachers are providing more opportunities for pupils' to work independently. They are becoming increasingly effective at 'chunking' pupils' learning, so pupils can review their progress and swift action is taken to tackle any misconceptions. Time is being used more purposefully. However, some teachers do not pace their lessons well enough to ensure pupils' learning moves on more quickly. Teachers' marking provides pupils with pointers for improvement and there are increasing opportunities for pupils to address mistakes in their work.

Considerable improvement to the Early Years Foundation Stage mean children can access all areas of learning and the opportunities for them to make independent choices have increased. Learning is more purposeful because it is better matched to children's needs and interests. Reading and writing have a higher priority in the classroom, so children are increasingly choosing to access these resources. Adults are seizing opportunities to reinforce pupils' understanding of letter formation, simple sentence structure and the sounds that letters make. As a result, almost all children are making better than expected progress from their lower than average starting points. Many children have attained the goals expected for their age, which means they are well placed to access the Year 1 curriculum. Children are beginning to use the outdoor environment more often and the range of activities available to them has improved. Nonetheless, the quality of pupils' learning outdoors does not match the provision available inside the classroom.

Progress since the last section 5 inspection on the area for improvement:

- raise attainment and improve the progress made by children in the Early Years Foundation Stage by ensuring that provision in the Reception class is sharply focused on learning – good

## **Behaviour and safety of pupils**

The importance of regular attendance is clearly understood by pupils and staff because it is a high priority in the school. Pupils' improved attendance levels have been maintained since the previous monitoring inspection, so they are beginning to reach the national average. The attendance levels of girls and pupils known to be eligible for free school meals have improved, so these groups are attending school more often. More pupils arrive at school on time because the school has provided guidance to parents and carers to explain the impact on learning of arriving late to lessons. Nonetheless, some pupils do not attend school regularly enough. Decisive action by members of the governing body means they are beginning to tackle absence caused by holidays during term time with greater vigour.

Pupils' considerate behaviour makes a strong contribution to their learning and to a safe and calm school environment. They are willing to listen to and accept feedback on their work because they know they are cared for. Pupils' confidence and self esteem is boosted by the praise they receive from adults and the support provided by their peers. Pupils have utter confidence in adults to deal with any issues they raise. They say behaviour is improving and bullying is a very rare occurrence.

Progress since the last section 5 inspection on the area for improvement:

- improve pupils' attendance – satisfactory

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

The pace of change has gathered momentum so much has been achieved since the previous monitoring inspection. Senior leaders and managers have effectively harnessed the shared determination and commitment of all staff to drive forward improvement. They are becoming more confident about the decisive actions they need to take to remedy weaknesses. Consequently, the school is taking greater ownership for their improvement and is less reliant on external support to lead the way. School development planning is an increasingly effective tool in shaping the school's improvement journey. Parents and carers are supportive of the school and the changes that are being made. They recognise learning is becoming more challenging and pupils are making better progress.

The redistribution of roles and responsibilities created by the restructure of the leadership team is bearing fruit. This means senior leaders and managers have dedicated time to plan, review and identify future actions in a more systematic manner. Monitoring activities are becoming more frequent and rigorous. The success of these activities is clearly evident in better teaching and the improved quality of work in pupils' books. A whole-school review of teaching plus clear guidance on non-negotiable practice means staff have a much clearer understanding of what is expected from them and what they need to do to improve their teaching. Assessment information is being used well to identify underperformance and ensure resources are targeted to pupils who require extra support. Senior leaders and

managers are aware of the achievement gaps between different groups. However, the performance of more-able pupils is not being monitored closely enough. Curriculum team leaders and managers are making an increasingly strong contribution to school improvement through the advice, training and resources they are providing to their colleagues. The role of the special educational needs coordinator has improved because there are greater opportunities to monitor provision in this area of the school. Members of the governing body have benefitted from external training which means they are better placed to challenge senior leaders and managers on pupils' performance data. They have an accurate understanding of the school's success and remaining weaknesses because they frequently review the school's action plan and are more involved in first-hand monitoring.

Progress since the last section 5 inspection on the area for improvement:

- improve the quality and effectiveness of strategic planning for improvement, by defining precise success criteria in the school development plan, so that the impact of actions can be measured accurately to provide an overview of the school's performance – good

### **External support**

The school continues to benefit from good quality external support. The work of the local leader in education and the partnership school has supported almost all aspects of the school's improvement. As senior leaders and managers grow in confidence the nature of this support is rightly changing and being targeted to more staff across the school in order to build capacity. The advice and challenge from the School Improvement Partner and local authority officers is aiding senior leaders and managers to enhance their monitoring skills and make informed choices about the external support they require.