

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

T 08456 40 40 40
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk

Direct T 01695 566 947
Direct F 01695 729 320
sdaly@cfbt.com



5 February 2009

Ms Linda Davis
Headteacher
Wistaston Green Primary School
Moreton Road
Crewe
Cheshire
CW2 8QS

Dear Ms Davis

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Wistaston Green Primary School

Following my visit with Diane Auton and Jane Hughes, Additional Inspectors, to your school on 3 and 4 February, 2009, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures in September 2008. The monitoring inspection report is attached and the main judgements are set out below.

Progress since being subject to special measures – satisfactory.

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 Cheshire.

Yours sincerely

Peter Toft
Her Majesty's Inspector

Special measures: monitoring of Wistaston Green Primary School

Report from the first monitoring inspection on 3 and 4 February 2009

Evidence

Inspectors observed the school's work including 25 lessons, two assemblies and a staff briefing; scrutinised documents; and held discussions with the headteacher, deputy headteacher, middle managers, groups of pupils, the chair of governors and four other governors, and an adviser from the local authority (LA) who is also the school improvement partner.

Context

Several teachers, including a deputy headteacher, have left the school since the last inspection in September 2008. New staff have been appointed to replace them and the school now has stable staffing and management structures.

Achievement and standards

Since the inspection in September 2008, standards and pupils' achievement and progress have improved overall. Although standards in reading, writing, mathematics and science remain below average by Years 2 and 6, a greater proportion of pupils are now working at or near to age-related expectations in all year groups. Even so, underachievement still remains, especially in Year 6, because pupils have not had time to fill all the gaps in their learning.

The school's own analysis of its assessment information and the work seen during the inspection show that improvements to teaching, learning and assessment are helping to raise standards. The rigorous focus by senior leaders on pupils' achievement and standards is highly effective. Classrooms and shared spaces around the school are attractive, bright and orderly environments in which to learn. Following training, staff are increasingly secure in their assessments of the standards pupils attain. A high number of staff are new to the school. They have quickly familiarised themselves with the characteristics of pupils in their classes and their individual needs. Using improved and good procedures for tracking pupils' progress and identifying underachievement, staff are now ensuring that most pupils receive the right levels of challenge in lessons in order to reach their potential, though there is still scope to challenge the more able pupils further. Senior leaders have a clear picture of how well pupils are performing in the core subjects and whether they are on track to achieve as well as they should. Well targeted additional support is available for pupils or groups of pupils identified as falling behind. This is helping to push pupils up from the lower levels of attainment and fewer pupils are significantly underachieving. This is particularly so for pupils in Years 1 and 2, whose historical underachievement was less severe than for pupils in Year 6. In Year 6, even though teaching is now consistently good and better, the legacy of previous



underachievement continues to make it difficult for pupils to reach the expected standards for their ages.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in September 2008:

- Raise children's standards and achievement in English, mathematics and science – satisfactory.

Early Years Foundation Stage

The school has worked hard to improve the quality of provision in the Reception class and to rectify inadequacies identified at the last inspection. The overall quality of teaching across the Early Years Foundation Stage is now good. This is increasing the progress children make in all the areas of learning. Children in the Reception class now show skills which are close to the expected levels for their age. They clearly enjoy the range of learning activities provided for them as these activities are appropriately matched to their learning needs. The learning environment in the Reception class has been improved, although this is work in progress and further improvements are both planned and required. The good quality learning environment in the Nursery has been sustained. Children's personal development is satisfactory and arrangements to support their welfare are now good across the setting. Children behave well across the Early Years Foundation Stage; they enjoy warm relationships with the adults in the setting and respond well to the clear and consistent expectations for acceptable behaviour. The new Early Years Foundation Stage leader has made a good start and with her colleagues has drawn up an action plan aimed at raising standards and achievement and improving the quality of provision. Assessment of children's work and development helps adults to ensure satisfactory progress in both the Nursery and Reception classes. Areas for improvement have been identified accurately. However, timescales are broad and success criteria are ill defined. Staff have not yet resolved some important issues. Procedures to track children's progress and to evaluate the impact of teaching and the curriculum, for example, have not yet been fully coordinated across the Early Years Foundation Stage. Further work remains to be done to coordinate the organisation of the classes.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in September 2008:

- Improve the quality of education in the Early Years Foundation Stage and ensure that all children make better progress across all areas of learning – satisfactory.

Personal development and well-being

Pupils are generally polite and courteous and show positive attitudes to school. They say that behaviour in school is now 'much better' and that they like the new system of rewards and sanctions because it is fair. They appreciate the fact that lessons are

now much less likely to be disrupted by bad behaviour and that 'you can get on better with your work'. They enjoy trusting relationships with the staff and feel confident that there is always someone on hand to help with their problems. This overall improvement is the result of a firm, consistent and positive approach by all staff to behaviour management and support for pupils' well-being. A small number of pupils continue to present complex emotional and behavioural difficulties which are exceptionally challenging. Despite its best efforts, the school has not been able to address these challenges without recourse to exclusion because the resources currently at its disposal are not adequate to meet the acute needs of this group of pupils. As a result, the rate of exclusion continues to be exceptionally high. Pupils' spiritual, moral and social development is continuing to improve as a result of good opportunities to reflect on serious issues through the curriculum and in assemblies. Teamwork and work with partners in lessons are helping pupils to collaborate well. Older pupils enjoy working as play leaders and reading buddies for younger ones and this adds to the school's developing caring, family ethos. The school council is active and plays a role in decision making. Pupils have a good awareness of personal safety and healthy lifestyle issues. They appreciate the good range of extra-curricular clubs and activities which cater for the interests of pupils in both Key Stages 1 and 2.

Quality of provision

The quality of teaching is improving rapidly and is now mainly good or better. Several outstanding lessons were observed during the inspection, during previous LA reviews and also as part of the school's own rigorous monitoring process. Only a tiny proportion of inadequate teaching remains. Good and outstanding practice is well spread throughout the school. This high quality teaching offers the required levels of challenge to extend most pupils' learning and to accelerate their progress. As a result, pupils enjoy their lessons, engage purposefully in activities and are increasingly successful learners. Teachers systematically plan lessons to meet pupils' needs because they have access to reliable assessment information that pinpoints exactly where pupils are in their learning and what they need to do next to improve. Nevertheless, there are occasions when pupils continue to repeat exercises in lessons when a more challenging activity would extend their learning more rapidly. Teachers demonstrate high expectations of pupils in their classes. Behaviour management procedures are used consistently by all adults. This follows the new procedures, introduced by the senior leadership team and shared with pupils and parents, to ensure that classrooms are orderly and that there is a clear purpose to each lesson. Nevertheless, the school reports that some extreme behaviour from a minority of very needy pupils still disrupts some lessons from time to time.

Provision for pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities has improved partly as a result of better behaviour. Teaching assistants no longer have to police poor behaviour frequently and can instead concentrate on providing skilful support for pupils with specific needs. This is helping these pupils to make the progress of which they are capable and some of this is increasingly rapid. Class teachers and teaching

assistants work well together in teams. Teaching assistants use their initiative, track the progress of the pupils they support and provide increasingly individualised provision. Good relationships between adults and pupils result in purposeful and welcoming classrooms and shared areas.

In the most successful teaching, practitioners increasingly link different aspects of pupils' learning. For instance, in an outstanding mathematics lesson in Year 1 the teacher helped pupils to develop their sorting and recording skills very successfully. Then, later that day, they were able to develop these skills during a session in the computer suite, recording data and then producing a bar graph of their results. Clever use of role play in history in Year 2 enlivened pupils' learning experiences. Brisk pace and good levels of challenge encourage pupils to succeed in their learning.

The quality of marking is improving and pupils receive and pay more attention to the increasingly detailed feedback that teachers record in their books. For instance, pupils in Year 6 conscientiously looked back at their previous piece of work to check exactly what they needed to do to improve the task they were about to begin. The best marking is regular, detailed and offers supportive guidance.

The school liaises appropriately with external agencies to promote pupils' progress, health and well-being. It complies with statutory requirements for health and safety including safeguarding and child protection. The quality of the academic guidance for pupils is improved and pupils are given useful verbal and written feedback to help them improve their work. Attendance remains below average, although it has improved somewhat since the last inspection. This is as a result of the new programme of incentives and the school's direct intervention work with families whose children are at risk of poor attendance.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in September 2008:

- Ensure that teaching and learning are of consistently good quality – good.

Leadership and management

Under the outstanding guidance of the headteacher and deputy headteacher, a clear sense of direction has been established and readily accepted by the staff. Morale is high and a strong sense of cooperation has emerged. Planning for improvement is first-rate and progress towards the intended improvements is carefully and clearly evaluated by the senior staff. The school now has a very clear and evidence-based understanding of its strengths and areas needing development. Middle management has been strengthened by the adoption of agreed procedures, for example in reviewing subject provision, by the appointment of new staff, and by the coaching and supporting of staff to enable them to carry out their roles effectively. Support

given by the school and the LA to the newly qualified teacher has been of good quality.

Subject leaders overall have the authority to oversee the curriculum being taught and the standards of pupils' work. There is still scope for the excellent practice in subject leadership, for example in English, to be spread more widely throughout the curriculum. Much effort has been put into helping teachers to measure and analyse pupils' achievement in core subjects. Teachers now know very well the levels at which their pupils are achieving and they use this information to plan lessons. Teachers plan lessons meticulously to ensure that pupils of different abilities receive teaching which meets their needs, though there is scope in some classes for abler children to be given more challenging work.

The management of pupils' behaviour is good, and sometimes outstanding, around the school and in the vast majority of classes. This is based upon clear and agreed expectations and teaching practices and the capacity of adults to be firm in leading the pupils. It is worryingly undermined, however, by the longstanding disruption caused by a small number of children who can display extreme behaviour. This occurs despite the extensive efforts and considerable skill brought to bear on them by senior staff, teachers and teaching assistants. When it occurs, it saps the time of managers, teachers and teaching assistants which should be devoted to teaching pupils and running the school. At the root of the problem is the difficulty the school has faced in securing effective external assistance to ensure that these children are given appropriate and specialised support.

The governing body has been strengthened by the recruitment of new members with considerable and relevant expertise. This, combined with the good knowledge of the needs of the local community possessed by more longstanding governors, is enabling governance to become fully effective. The current intention to provide well tailored training to enable all governors to carry out their monitoring work effectively is exactly right at this time.

Progress on the areas for improvement identified by the inspection in September 2008:

- Ensure that all subject leaders know how well children achieve in their subjects and that they use this information to improve the curriculum – good.
- Improve the management of pupils' behaviour, so that all children have the opportunity to achieve – satisfactory.

External support

The school has been diligent in seeking external support to help it to meet its development needs. Staff have made assiduous use of advice and guidance gained from outside sources. The LA has provided a range of support to the school before

and since it was deemed to need special measures. Some of this has been effective, not least in the strengthening of the governing body, the appointment of new staff and the evaluation of teaching and learning. The overall effectiveness of the support has been undermined by its piecemeal nature, however, and the lack of precisely targeted support to help the school secure appropriate educational provision for those pupils who display extreme behavioural problems.

Initially, the LA's statement of action was over general and not sharply focused enough to meet the school's development needs. The updated version contains appropriate details of the actions proposed, their timings and those responsible for carrying them out effectively. It is satisfactory in those areas concerned with strategic development, standards and achievement, and teaching and learning. However, its coverage of support to improve pupils' behaviour is inadequate.

Priorities for further improvement

- Raise children's standards and achievement in English, mathematics and science.
- Secure forthwith effective external support to ensure that those pupils with extreme behaviour problems are given proper access to appropriate educational provision.
- Strengthen the coordination of assessment and tracking procedures in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

