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17 April 2013

Jackie Bunyan  
Bolton Parish CE Primary School  
Kestor Street  
Bolton  
Lancashire  
BL2 2AN

Dear Ms Bunyan

**Requires improvement monitoring inspection visit under section 8 of the Education act 2005 to Bolton Parish CE Primary School, Bolton Local Authority.**

Following my visit to your school on 17 April 2013, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report on the findings of my visit. Thank you for the help you gave me and for the time you made available to discuss the actions you are taking to improve the school since the most recent section 5 inspection.

The visit was the first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in February 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

**Evidence**

During the visit, Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI) held meetings with the headteacher, senior leaders, the Chair of the governing body, a representative from the Diocese, a local authority officer and a group of Year 6 pupils. She evaluated the updated school improvement plan. She scrutinised minutes of the governing body meetings and raising achievement group (RAG); records of the monitoring of the quality of teaching; and pupils' progress information.

**Context**

There have been no significant changes to the staff team or the school's organisation since the inspection. However, the deputy headteacher has given notice of his intention to retire at the end of the summer term.

## **Main findings**

Actions taken by senior leaders and governors since February have rightly built upon those begun in previous terms enhanced by additional areas identified by the inspection team. In discussion with HMI it is clear that leaders and governors know how to move the school to good and show a strong determination and ambition to succeed. Quite correctly the focus is on strengthening the quality of teaching and ensuring consistently good or better learning for all pupils. Much training for all levels of staff, including teaching assistants, has continued. Senior leaders have taken responsibility for certain aspects of the school improvement plan to develop across the school. They have swiftly secured a cycle of training, modelling, coaching, checking and feedback to improve aspects of teachers' practice. High morale and high quality professional dialogue amongst staff is now more common as they share ideas and discuss how aspects of their practice can improve further.

Reviewed planning sheets now indicate challenging activities which allow pupils to use the skills they have already learned in different ways. Work is matched to the needs and abilities of all pupils. So for example, some groups are set a problem at the start of a lesson while others receive explanation from the teacher. Pupils say that activities are more interesting and they enjoy for example, the drama or 'frieze frame' techniques used in different subjects. Pupils know the National Curriculum levels they are working on and can check their work against cards on the tables which reflect the different levels of success pupils can achieve. Pupils say they now know how to move on in their learning; several said, 'Before it was just the teachers, now we have control'. Improvement in the quality of marking has led to a more precise process which pupils fully understand. Pupils appreciate the opportunities to read through the teachers' comments at the start of a lesson. Chances to mark their own work and that of their classmates have led to increased responsibility so that pupils get on more quickly with their work, 'We have more time to get on'. Similarly pupils take advantage of meeting with a teacher or teaching assistant to discuss their work and what needs to be done to improve it.

The headteacher and senior leaders monitor the quality of teaching and through better use of pupil progress data are giving more attention to the progress pupils make during lessons. Information from lesson observations, scrutiny of pupils' workbooks, scrutiny of planning, discussion with pupils and feedback from staff show an improving picture in the quality of teaching. It is no surprise then that this is translated into increased rates of progress for pupils across the school. Compared with the same time last year the percentages of pupils making expected or better progress are higher and the schools' targets, if realised, will show a significant uplift on the results at Year 6 to those achieved in 2012.

Subject leaders receive time to develop their subject each term which is linked to the introduction of a revised method of teaching different subjects. Leaders' involvement in checking on the quality of the teaching in their subjects is still at an early stage.

Governors have played an important part in challenging leaders at all levels. They introduced a raising achievement group to set the course and add speed to improvements. Working as a cohesive group, members include governors, the headteacher and representatives from the local authority and diocese. Meeting each

half term they request information from the school on pupils' progress, progress against all aspects of the school improvement plan and progress against the inspection recommendations. Minutes from these meetings and from full Governing Body meetings reflect the challenge provided through questioning and setting senior leaders specific tasks. Governors recognise the appointment of a new deputy headteacher as an opportunity to strengthen the senior leadership team and hope to appoint later this week.

The revised school improvement plan includes all features necessary for the school to move to good. However, it does not reflect the raised expectations of pupils' progress which are evident in discussion with all parties involved. Although monitoring activities are extensive there is an opportunity for the evaluation of these activities to be captured in a more systematic way so that all involved can celebrate successes and ensure urgency to improve further.

Senior leaders and governors are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection. Following the visit to the school, HMI recommend that further action is taken to:

- refine the school improvement plan to reflect the raised expectations of rates of pupils' progress the school now has in place
- capture and record more systematically the effect of monitoring activities so that all involved can see the progress the school is making towards being good, and ensure urgency to improve further
- include in the improvement plan professional development opportunities for the newly appointed deputy headteacher
- explore the use of Ofsted publications, subject specific information and good practice examples to support training in school.

Ofsted will continue to monitor the school until its next section 5 inspection.

### **External support**

The local authority supported senior leaders and governors in revising the school improvement plan. The local authority officer has organised a link with an outstanding school and a plan of action is in place for the schools to mutually benefit from the partnership. As a member of the RAG team, he supports and challenges senior leaders. Observations of teaching with the headteacher are planned for later this term.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Bolton.

Yours sincerely

Eileen Mulgrew  
Her Majesty's Inspector