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11 June 2013

Mrs Lindsay Timms  
Headteacher  
Cottam Primary School  
Haydocks Lane  
Cottam  
Preston  
Lancashire  
PR4 0NY

Dear Mrs Timms

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Cottam Primary School, Lancashire**

Following my visit to your school on 10 June 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 March 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

### **Evidence**

During the visit I held meetings with you, the teachers who have management responsibility for Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 and a representative from the local authority. I also had the opportunity to meet with a group of governors including the Chair of the Governing Body and a number of Year 5 pupils.

I scrutinised a range of documents including the school's post Ofsted improvement plan, records of the monitoring of the quality of teaching and minutes of those governing body meetings that have been held since the previous inspection.

I examined the work in a sample of pupils' books so that I could assess the quality of marking. You accompanied me on a tour of the school where I had the opportunity to observe children busily working on a variety of activities to develop their writing skills.

### **Main findings**

The post Ofsted improvement plan demonstrates that you and your governors are determined to move the school rapidly forward on its journey of improvement. The plan is detailed and clearly identifies the actions that leaders and managers are taking, and will

take in the future, to address each of the areas for improvement identified by inspectors. These include:

- further improving the quality of teaching and learning
- raising pupils' attainment, particularly in writing
- improving leadership and management so that it has more impact on pupils' achievement; in order to drive up standards even further.

There are milestones in the plan which enables governors to assess the progress the school is making against each of the targets for improvement. However, it is not always obvious who has responsibility for checking how well the plan is going. In addition some of the success criteria in the plan are statements of actions being completed rather than relating to the impact these actions will have on pupils' achievement.

Since the inspection the local authority, working with governors, has taken effective steps to enable the school to meet its development targets. For example the local authority brokered a successful link between Cottam and a local outstanding primary school. Consequently, teachers in both schools are able to share their ideas about what works best in the classroom.

Working with the headteacher from your link school you have undertaken a review of your strategy for monitoring the quality of teaching and learning and as a result introduced a more robust system. Since the previous inspection the focus of this monitoring has been on the quality of the teaching of writing and you have identified, with staff, best practice and areas for development. Your monitoring records show that the teaching of writing is now consistently good and consequently pupils' progress is improving.

An officer from the local authority has carried out a review of the governing body and has confirmed that it is carrying out its responsibilities effectively. Working with the local authority's governance improvement manager the governors have agreed their own development plan, which further strengthens their role in determining the school's future direction. The governors' standards and effectiveness committee is providing an appropriate balance between supporting you and your colleagues as you address the targets in the post Ofsted improvement plan and holding you to account for their impact.

Senior leaders, with the help of a literacy consultant have reviewed the school's approach to the teaching of writing. Early evidence from pupils' work in books and examples of their writing displayed around the school indicates that the teaching of writing is now more effective and as a result pupils' progress is accelerating.

Senior leaders have also reviewed the school's marking policy. Scrutiny of pupils' work shows that marking is now more effective in informing pupils about what they have done well and what they need to do to improve; particularly in writing. Consequently pupils are able to learn from their mistakes and are beginning to make more rapid progress as a result. When asked, pupils say that they value this new way of marking their work and the feedback they receive from their teachers is helping their learning.

Senior leaders and governors are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection. The school should take further action to:

- adjust the post Ofsted improvement plan to make it clearer who is responsible for monitoring the actions being taken to improve the school and who is responsible for measuring their impact.

Ofsted may carry out further visits and, where necessary, provide further support and challenge to the school until its next section 5 inspection.

### **External support**

The school's leaders and managers have drawn effectively upon the support of the local authority school improvement service and external consultants to drive forward the school's post Ofsted improvement plan. An effective partnership has been forged between your school and another local primary school that is enabling colleagues to share their expertise. A literacy consultant continues to work effectively with teachers' to increase their proficiency in the teaching of writing. The governing body has benefitted from the advice and support of the local authority's governor support service.

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

Yours sincerely

Charles Lowry  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**