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3 July 2013

Ms Nerys Hughes  
Headteacher  
St Bartholomew's Church of England Primary School  
Hallfold  
Hall Street  
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OL12 8TL

Dear Ms Hughes

**Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to St Bartholomew's Church of England Primary School, Lancashire**

Following my visit to your school on 2 July 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 May 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

**Evidence**

During the visit I met with you and the senior leaders who have responsibility for Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2. The senior leader for Key Stage 2 is also the deputy headteacher. I also held meetings with members of the Governing Body, including the Chair of Governors, a representative of the local authority and the teacher who has responsibility for the Early Years Foundation Stage. I also took the opportunity to speak with a group of Year 6 pupils about their experience of school.

I scrutinised a range of documents including the school development plan; updated and revised in the light of the findings of the inspection. I also examined records of the monitoring of the quality of teaching. Together we examined the work in a sample of pupils' books so that we could assess the quality of teachers' marking.

You accompanied me on a tour of the school where I had the opportunity to observe children working on various activities and you described for me your plans for the future of the school.

## **Context**

You have been in post eight weeks and soon after becoming headteacher the school was inspected. Since your appointment you have reorganised the way pupils are taught in Key Stage 2. The mixed Year 5 and Year 6 class has been split into two single age classes. This has enabled the Year 5 pupils to be taught together and start Year 6 work early. You have increased staffing in the mixed Year 3 and Year 4 class to ensure that this group of pupils receive a boost to improve their literacy and numeracy skills.

## **Main findings**

Senior leaders, managers and governors accept that the recent inspection provided an accurate evaluation of the overall effectiveness of the school. The areas for improvement identified by inspectors providing a clear direction for the school to follow on its journey to good.

You have correctly identified that the most urgent priority is to improve the quality of teaching and learning. Accordingly you have taken rapid action to:

- strengthen lesson preparation so that teachers plan to meet the needs of the different groups of pupils in the class
- increase the frequency and rigour with which you monitor the quality of teaching and learning
- improve the frequency and quality of marking.

Even though a number of initiatives have only been in place a relatively short time, there is some evidence of positive impact. For example in the Early Years Foundation Stage staff are now providing greater challenge for more able children in lessons. Consequently, the progress of this group is accelerating.

Since the inspection you have made sure that the system for monitoring the quality of teaching and learning is more robust. You have observed each of your colleagues teach twice; providing each of them with detailed feedback on their strengths and areas for development. As a result you have identified those teachers in need of help to get better, given them targets to improve their practice and put in place effective support to enable them to do so. This support has included you working with these colleagues to improve their lesson planning and showing them examples of effective marking. This is leading to improvements in the quality of teaching; however you are under no illusions that there is still work to be done, with some teachers, to ensure that teaching becomes consistently good across the school. Your monitoring has also revealed that the teaching of writing, identified as requiring improvement when the school was inspected, is weaker than the teaching of mathematics. The reason for this is that, up until now, there has been no agreed policy for the teaching of writing. Consequently, writing was taught in different ways by different teachers. This lack of consistency meant that pupils' progress in this key element of the curriculum was slower than it should have been as they moved through the school. You have started to address this and have introduced a new model for the teaching of writing in Year 3, which will be developed as the pupils pass through Key Stage 2. This is a relatively new initiative and it is too early to assess the impact that this approach is having on pupils' progress.

You have refined the school development plan in the light of the Ofsted inspection. This plan is well written. The main priorities for improvement are identified as are the actions that leaders and managers will take to address them. However, responsibility for monitoring the progress of the development plan relies too heavily on you. This limits the involvement of the other senior leaders in school improvement and as a consequence reduces opportunities for them to develop their leadership skills.

Some of the criteria you use to measure the success of the development plan should be sharper. For example the school's targets for pupil's performance at the end of Key Stage 2 have not been divided into the separate subjects of reading, writing and mathematics. Consequently this will limit senior leaders' and governors' ability to determine pupils' success in each subject.

You have revised the marking policy and this is being implemented by staff across the school. This has resulted in pupils' books being marked regularly. Where marking is of high quality the teacher makes clear to the pupil what they have done well and what improvements are needed, to make the work even better. However, inconsistencies in the standard of marking remain. There are examples where teachers have suggested improvements but these have not been followed up by the pupil. There are also examples of comments that are unhelpful. Consequently opportunities for pupils to learn from their mistakes are missed.

The governors are fully behind your drive to improve the school. They value the management information they receive from senior leaders, which is enabling them to increasingly hold the school to account. However, an external review of governance has yet to be carried out to determine the support governors need to improve further.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that

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

- review senior leaders roles in relation to monitoring the work of the school to enable them to take more responsibility for school improvement and reduce the burden on the headteacher
- sharpen the school development plan by clearly identifying end of Key Stage 2 targets in each of the separate subjects of reading, writing and mathematics
- ensure that the quality of all teachers' marking is brought up to the standard of the best. So that all pupils know what they need to do to improve their work and teachers check that these improvements have been made
- ensure that an external review of governance is carried out.

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 local authority's monitoring and intervention team are providing effective support for you and the governors in your drive to improve the school. A member of this team, who is a headteacher of a local outstanding primary school, has worked with you to refine the school development plan in light of the inspection. She has jointly observed lessons with you to assure your judgements about the quality of teaching and advise on appropriate support for those teachers whose practice is not consistently good.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Director of Children's Services for Lancashire and the Diocesan Board of Education for the Church of England Diocese of Manchester.

Yours sincerely

Charles Lowry  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**