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10 July 2013

Mr Mark Mackley  
Headteacher  
Great Harwood St Bartholomew's Parish Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School  
Ash Street  
Great Harwood  
Blackburn  
Lancashire  
BB6 7QA

Dear Mr Mackley

**Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Great Harwood St Bartholomew's Parish Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School, Lancashire**

Following my visit to your school on 9 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, senior and middle leaders, the Chair and one other member of the Governing Body, representatives from the local authority and a group of pupils. I evaluated the school action plan and scrutinised other key documentation. I also had the opportunity to accompany you on a tour of the school.

## Main findings

You believe the inspection judgement was a true reflection of where your school is on its journey and have used this positively with your staff, who are keen to know what to do to improve. Training sessions and mentoring of individual teachers have already had impact. The number of teachers who teach consistently good lessons has increased since the last inspection. Over recent weeks one teacher has transformed the learning environment in his classroom which has had a positive effect on the pupils' attitude to their learning.

The pupils I spoke to have noticed a difference in their lessons. A Year 3 pupil said, 'Our work is harder but in more of a fun way,' which reflects the greater focus on challenge and the willingness of staff to try new approaches in their lessons. Pupils talked positively about being given more opportunities to work together and about the range of new reading books which has been recently purchased. However, although your actions have brought about improvements in the quality of teaching, you have not yet totally eradicated inadequate teaching in the school.

All teachers are now using the agreed marking and feedback procedures more effectively. Pupils in all year groups could talk about the 'green for growth' comments and how teachers give them time in class to respond to these. One Year 2 pupil was very keen to tell me about 'fix it' time, where, 'the teacher doesn't fix our work; we do.' This demonstrates that these important learning habits are being developed from an early stage.

The school's action plan is a thorough and detailed document which explains how senior leaders will bring about improvement in all aspects of the school. However, the plan does not give sufficient priority to the areas of improvement identified in the last inspection. You have stepped up the emphasis on monitoring since the last inspection with a regular cycle of work scrutiny and lesson observation, and staff understand your higher expectations. However, you and your deputy are taking on too much of this rather than making subject leaders more responsible for teaching and achievement in their areas.

The governing body is real strength in the school and is rising to the challenge of the recent inspection judgement. The Chair of the Governing Body has a very clear understanding of what is required for the school to be judged as good in its next inspection and, she and the rest of the governors possess the necessary skills to work alongside you to make this happen. The minutes of the standards and effectiveness committee meetings provide clear evidence of the challenging questions which governors are now asking. This committee is very much the 'engine room' of school improvement at St Bartholomew's.

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:

- sharpen the school action plan so it gives greater priority to the areas of improvement identified at the last inspection, and is clear about who is responsible for leading, monitoring and evaluating the various actions
- eradicate inadequate teaching by taking firmer and more decisive steps to tackle poor classroom practice
- ensure that middle leaders are more accountable for performance in their areas of responsibility.

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**

You had already been proactive in seeking support from the local authority, and this has now stepped up since the last inspection. Your school advisor and advisors from the monitoring and intervention team have helped you to get the school back on track after it was knocked off course following some significant staffing difficulties. They have brokered support for you with a local leader of education, as well as providing training themselves which has already led to improvements in the quality of teaching. The local authority was instrumental in setting up the standards and effectiveness committee and they continue to play an important role in helping the governors to drive the school forward.

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

Yours sincerely

Anne Seneviratne

**Her Majesty's Inspector**