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16 July 2013

Pamela Curtis  
Interim Headteacher  
Bythams Primary School  
Creeton Road  
Little Bytham  
Grantham  
NG33 4PX

Dear Mrs Curtis

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Bythams Primary School**

Following my visit to your school on 15 July 2013, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report 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, meetings were held with you, the headteacher designate, the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Governing Body and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. Short visits were made to all classrooms to observe teaching. A range of documents were considered relating to school improvement planning, evaluation of improvements and pupils' progress.

### **Context**

The local authority seconded an interim headteacher to the school immediately following the inspection in March. A headteacher designate has been appointed who will become permanent headteacher after a period of preparation for the role. There have recently been significant changes to the teaching staff.

## **Main findings**

Since your appointment you have introduced a well-planned programme of improvements. These take account of the recommendations from the section 5 inspection and also tackle some additional weaknesses that you have identified, for example, in provision for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage and in the support for disabled pupils and those with special educational needs. You have taken care to ensure that staff fully understand the changes you are introducing therefore they are putting them into practice effectively. You have raised staff morale and they are working very hard to improve pupils' achievement.

The new headteacher designate has given you strong support in improving teaching, especially by bringing energy and enthusiasm to planning a stimulating curriculum with many exciting first-hand experiences. These experiences are being used particularly effectively to increase pupils' motivation and skills for writing. You have introduced a much improved method for tracking pupils' progress. This helps teachers to plan lessons and additional support that better meet the needs of all pupils.

As a result of these improvements, pupils' outcomes have already begun to improve. Children in the Early Years Foundation Stage are learning at a faster rate because they are engaged to a much greater extent in well planned purposeful activities. By the end of Year 2 pupils' achievement in reading, writing and mathematics has improved and this is most notable for the more-able. By the end of Year 6, the proportion of pupils meeting or exceeding the national average standard in both English and mathematics has improved considerably since last year. Following training for all staff, disabled pupils and those with special educational needs receive much better support and their progress is beginning to improve.

You recognise that before the school can be judged as good, its leaders and staff must build the capacity to sustain recent improvements after you leave. You have therefore started a programme of coaching for the headteacher designate to enable him to ensure continuity of effective leadership when he becomes headteacher. You also have clear plans to prepare other staff for leading aspects of the school's work, so that improvements do not depend solely on one person. These plans are at an early stage of being implemented because some key members of staff will not be in post until September.

The Governing Body has significantly improved its contribution to the school's capacity to continue improving achievement. Following the inspection, they took the initiative in seeking a review of governance and this has helped them to pinpoint the aspects of their work that they need to improve in order to provide better support and challenge. They are in the process of developing a very systematic approach for holding the school to account. For example, they include in each improvement plan a searching set of questions for judging its effectiveness and you use these as the basis for your regular updates on progress.

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:

- Build the capacity of the headteacher designate and staff to sustain recent improvements in pupils' achievement after you leave.

Ofsted will 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 provided very effective support when leadership and the quality of teaching became fragile at the time of the section 5 inspection. They immediately provided a strong seconded headteacher to stabilise the school and to introduce essential improvements. They have provided training in Early Years Foundation Stage education, supporting disabled pupils and those with special education needs and they led the review of governance. These measures have resulted in improved provision and pupils' outcomes.

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

Yours sincerely

John Rutherford  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**