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4 October 2013

Mrs Kirsty Cooper,  
Acting Headteacher  
Grayrigg CofE School  
Grayrigg  
Kendal  
Cumbria  
LA8 9BU

Dear Mrs Cooper,

**Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Grayrigg CofE School, Cumbria**

Following my visit to your school on 3 October 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 July 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

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:

- strengthen the positive links developed with other schools to ensure appropriate support is maintained.

**Evidence**

During the visit, I met with you, the executive headteacher, pupils, the Chair and other members of the Governing Body to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. I had a telephone conversation with two representatives from the local authority. I evaluated the school development plans; the school's system for tracking pupils' attainment and progress, and the assessment summary for 2012-13. I met pupils from both classes to talk about recent changes in the school and look at examples of their work. You and I visited each classroom to meet pupils and staff and look at the improvements to teaching put in place since the last inspection and I took part in a whole school assembly.

## **Main findings**

You, the governors and staff are determined to ensure the school is good. The development plan focuses clearly on the areas for improvement identified in the recent inspection. The pupils' spelling is improving due to you working on this daily and the strong focus on improving their writing skills and through the homework being set. Guided reading and spelling are being taught in ability phases rather than ages. As a result pupils are encouraged to take leadership roles to support others and increase their independence and self-esteem to take on new challenges. You have improved the library area and set up a parent/child book club to encourage a stronger reading culture. One pupil insisted on reading to me to show her progress. Pupils told me about the changes to the library, the after-school groups that they attend and how they won the best school display at the Torchlight Procession in Kendal. They have an evident pride in the school.

Book reviews are being used to encourage writing and a better understanding of a writing voice. Writing across the curriculum is now done in one book to enable consistency of marking and targeting progress. Pupils showed me their books and explained how the marking and target setting enabled them to improve their work. They are developing a business as part of a national initiative and have written persuasive letters to national companies and linked this to their harvest festival work. You have started to see the impact of this in their writing and mathematics skills as well as encouraging their speaking and listening skills. Presentation of pupils' work has improved as a result of you setting out clear expectations which are not negotiable and pupils were proud to show me their work.

Parents are better informed about their child's progress and aware of their targets so they can further encourage learning at home through reading and spelling support. As a result Year 6 pupils had not slipped back in their reading ability after the long summer holiday. The school website has also enabled pupil homework to be responded to more quickly by the teacher.

Phonic work has been improved and a tighter focus on letters and sounds in Key Stage 1 is developed further in Key Stage 2 through investigation work. Displays in each class remind staff and pupils of key aspects of the phonic system.

The governing body has increased its involvement in the school by visiting more frequently and challenging and monitoring the school. Training has enabled the governing body to challenge you more robustly and you relish these challenges. They have appreciated the support given to them by the local authority and from the national leader of education: they have confidence in you and are supporting your professional development.

To secure the long-term effective leadership of the school you will remain in place as head of school due to the respect and confidence of the governors, staff and the parents. The school will continue to be supported at a strategic level by a national leader of education in an executive position.

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 continues to make good use of the support offered by the local authority. The local authority has advised and guided the governing body around the staffing structure and leadership within the school. The support you have received has enabled you to improve your presentation of progress data and raised the governing body's understanding of the data. The links you have forged with Kendal Collaborative Partnership have increased the opportunities for professional development for your staff and enrichment opportunities for your pupils. For example the physical education training has supported your use of the Sports Fund and developed the leadership skills of Year 6 pupils; and the support with music has improved subject development for your staff. The links you have developed with the national leader of education have resulted in your rapid transition into a more strategic leadership role.

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

Yours sincerely

Christina McIntosh

## **Her Majesty's Inspector**

The letter should be copied to the following:

- Appropriate authority - Chair of the Governing Body
- Local authority
- Diocese - for voluntary aided and voluntary controlled schools