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16 October 2013

Mrs Mandy Messham  
Headteacher  
St Ethelbert's RC Primary School  
Melbourne Road  
Deane  
Bolton  
Lancashire  
BL3 5RL

Dear Mrs Messham

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to St Ethelbert's RC Primary School, Bolton**

Following my visit to your school on 15 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:

- ensure the impact of actions taken in the school is shared with the governing body every half term.

### **Evidence**

During the visit, I met with you, other school leaders, seven pupils from Key Stage 2, the Chair and other members of the Governing Body and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. I evaluated the school development plans. You and I visited each classroom to meet pupils and staff and look at the changes you have made to the school environment. I also evaluated your report to the governing body and the minutes of recent governing body meetings as well as your record of monitoring teaching through lesson observations, work scrutiny and conversations with pupils.

### **Context**

You have taken on extra staff to further support the pupils. You have a new special educational needs coordinator who is a member of your leadership team.

## Main Findings

You, the governors and staff have responded well to the judgement of the previous inspection and are determined to continue to work together to ensure the school is good. The development plan focuses clearly on the areas for improvement identified in the recent inspection. Especially on improving the quality of teaching, particularly in mathematics, by ensuring that all teachers fully understand and use the data across the school to ensure lessons meet the needs of the pupils. The increased understanding of national data has had an impact on their own system of monitoring progress of pupils in their classes. Teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve have been raised as a result. Teachers realise the results from 2012-13 have not shown an improvement: as a result they have concentrated on focused intervention work in mathematics and reading to tackle the areas where some pupils struggle and also to challenge more able pupils to achieve at higher levels. Pupils were able to explain how the interventions were making a difference to their progress and could show me their targets were being met more quickly. The pupils were keen to express their views and comment on the areas they would like to develop through the school council, for example school meals and homework.

Training has been widespread and useful and you have used expertise from within the school and from external providers to improve the consistency of teaching mathematics. Your staff have collaborated and produced a plan to ensure mathematical skills are taught in the correct sequence so that one skill builds on another and this has improved teachers' subject knowledge. Classrooms displays and mathematics resources encourage pupils to learn independently. A new reading programme allows pupils to take roles and lead on learning which encourages a deeper level of thinking and involvement in reading activities. You have reallocated rooms where pupils receive extra support. The improved resources and the increased support for pupils have led to greater consistency in the quality of teaching. You have noticed this improvement in teaching during your lesson observations, your checks on lesson plans, and your conversations with pupils and checks on their books. You have improved your feedback to teachers and check that they have acted upon advice offered and supported your staff through increased training opportunities. It is too soon to see the impact of some of the training on pupil progress but the intervention work should now be showing impact which needs to be shared with the governing body.

The additional responsibility you have given to the assistant heads has improved their confidence in their leadership skills. Staff tell me that they are pulling together as a stronger team with a sharper focus, since the last inspection, and this is enabling the school to develop more swiftly and effectively. The teaching of mathematics has improved due to the increased shared ownership of the curriculum planning and the improved links with colleagues in other schools. Increased opportunities for pupils to discuss and solve mathematical problems and challenges in lessons is helping the pupils improve their speaking and listening skills.

The governing body has a clear view of how it will judge the impact of the actions in the school development plan and is keen to support and challenge the school more regularly during its journey to good. It has supported the school by approving an increase in staffing and resources to target improved progress in reading and mathematics. The governors are actively involved in the school and take part in learning walks, work scrutiny and talk to children to check on progress. They feel well supported by the local authority especially with their involvement in the new raising attainment group. They say that the increased sharing of the leadership across the senior leadership team is a positive step towards more rapid improvement.

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 are making good use of the support provided by the local authority prior to, and following, the recent inspection. The local authority provides good links with other schools and offers specific advice to help you improve teaching and learning through improved planning and subject awareness and also supports the governing body. Your school improvement professional has confidence in the direction and sense of purpose with which you are driving change within the school. She is keen to ensure that pupils' progress is monitored at the raising attainment group meetings to show the internal data is reflecting the improvements in the school.

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

Yours sincerely

Christina McIntosh  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**