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12 December 2013

Mr Stephen Crook  
Headteacher  
Nelson St Paul's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School  
Hibson Road  
Nelson  
Lancashire  
BB9 0DZ

Dear Mr Crook

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Nelson St Paul's Church of England Voluntary Aided Primary School, Lancashire**

Following my visit to your school on 11 December 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 October 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:

- specify the milestones in the action plan so governors are able to check on improvement.
- ensure governors rapidly develop their abilities and skills to hold senior leaders to account.

### **Evidence**

During the visit, meetings were held with you, other senior leaders, seven representatives of the Governing Body and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The school action plan and other documentation relating to school improvement and evaluations were evaluated. I also visited every class in the school.

### **Context**

There have been no changes to the school's context since the inspection.

## **Main findings**

You and your Governing Body accept the judgement of the last inspection and see it as a baseline from which to advance. Although you had only joined the school three weeks before the inspection you had identified the key issues for improvement it raised. You have subsequently accelerated the changes needed to address them. Your action plan is appropriate but should be further improved by defining milestones that will allow governors to check that it is working.

The way in which you restructured the leadership team is having a significant impact on improving the standards of teaching and learning. Senior leaders are more able to demonstrate how they improve the school. For example; the early years and foundation stage leader's use of high quality analysis of pupil achievement data and how they use it to raise standards by targeting support for pupils where it is most needed.

Teaching is improving because leaders insist upon teachers meeting higher expectations with regard to their planning and marking and because of your effective individual coaching for teachers. Teachers are better at using data to match tasks to pupils' abilities. Regular individual meetings with teachers to check pupils' progress are used to hold them to account and identify where further improvement is necessary. Teachers' morale is high because you make clear what needs to improve and provide appropriate support and guidance to help them achieve it.

Training for teachers and teaching assistants is improving their skills in the teaching of writing. More regular and rigorous checking by subject leaders regarding the impact of training on pupils' standards means they now identify what is successful and where further work needs to be done.

You have been swift to use your Local Authority Advisor to secure links with an outstanding school. This is used well to give teachers opportunities to visit and learn from good practice. Additional support from local authority consultants is improving the standards of teaching.

Governors were slow to respond to the outcomes of the inspection initially. However, the momentum is growing and effective actions have now been taken. Governors are taking appropriate steps to address gaps in their skills and knowledge regarding school improvement. There has been an external review of Governance by the Local Authority. However the school is awaiting its report and action plan. A Standards and Effectiveness Committee has been established and is focussed on holding senior leaders to account.

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 has tailored its support for the school appropriately, recognising the impact the new headteacher is having in improving standards. The Local Authority recognises the need to improve the ability of governors to challenge the school.

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

Yours sincerely

John Nixon

**Her Majesty's Inspector**