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15 January 2014

Mrs Sarah Powell  
Headteacher  
Burlington CofE School  
School Road  
Kirkby-in-Furness  
Cumbria  
LA17 7UH

Dear Mrs Powell

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

Following my visit to the school on 14 January 2014, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report my findings. 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 November 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Senior leaders and governors are not taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the last section 5 inspection. The school should take immediate action to:

- Restructure the committees of the governing body so there is more rapid and more frequent evaluation of:
  - pupils' achievement and progress
  - progress against the key issues raised in the inspection report.
- Begin the process of an external review of governance.
- Reduce the headteacher's teaching commitment so that more of her time can be spent leading the school.
- Increase staff accountability by ensuring they play a full part in improving pupils' achievement and leading improvements in the subjects they lead.
- Amend the school improvement plan to add in milestones to help governors and the local authority to measure how successful the actions have been. Increase the level of expectation in the plan so that every pupil is expected to make progress and achieve well.

## **Evidence**

During the visit, I met with half of the governing body; with a representative of Cumbria Local Authority and with you and senior staff. I evaluated the school's action plan and some of the new policies that had been written since the inspection. I also evaluated the staffing structure.

## **Context**

Since the inspection, the Chair of the governing body resigned which meant a new Chair and Vice Chair started in December. Two new governors have been appointed.

## **Main findings**

The recently-elected Chair of Governors has begun work to increase governors' involvement in the life of the school and to gather a first-hand understanding of the quality of the school's work. He has attended training which has resulted in increasing his knowledge of how to interpret data about pupils' standards and the progress they make.

Although there was a recommendation for the governing body to begin the process of an external review, no arrangements have been made for the review to take place. Governors were waiting for me to visit. As a result there has been some lost time in reorganising the committees and tackling any weaknesses in governance. The committee which evaluates pupils' achievement, the quality of teaching and pupils' behaviour meets approximately every three months. This means that governors have not yet had the chance to measure the impact of the school's actions to improve pupils' achievement. Being three months apart, the meetings do not enable governors to keep a frequent check on standards. Similarly, they have not been able to frequently discuss how well the points for improvement are being tackled.

The headteacher as well as leading the school also leads mathematics, teaches for half a week, and is the special educational needs coordinator. This means that her ability to lead the school is curtailed because her time is spread thinly across other obligations. The governing body should quickly make provision to ensure the headteacher is able to spend more time improving teaching and getting the school to good.

The headteacher has allocated subjects to different teachers to make sure the responsibility for improving teaching and pupils' achievement is spread across the school. The teacher in Reception and Year 1 has created an action plan for her area of the school with a view to make improvements to teaching and pupils' achievement. However leadership in other important subjects is at an early stage.

The improvement plan covers each of the points for improvement identified at the inspection. It needs to be sharpened so that it is easier for governors and the local authority to measure the success of the actions. This can be done by inserting measurable milestones which will plot a route for the school towards its destination of becoming good at the next inspection. Some of the expectations of pupils are too low within the plan for example to attain the level expected for their age. These are not challenging enough and expectations need to be raised.

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**

At the start of this year, before the inspection, the local authority increased its support from the very light touch support it had been providing previously. The school advisor has contacted an external excellent teacher who has already started work to improve the quality of teaching. As yet there is no discernible impact. Since the inspection a monitoring group has met once to measure the school's progress. As a result, the Chair of Governors has gained a rapid understanding of what needs to be done to improve and has a better understanding of how to interpret data about pupils' achievement. The school has also benefitted from advice from the local authority's personnel department to help set up a system to management the performance of teachers and other staff.

The local authority advisor has conducted joint observations with the headteacher in each class. As a result, the headteacher has a moderated and accurate view about the quality of teaching in the school.

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

Yours sincerely

Allan Torr

### **Her Majesty's Inspector**

The letter should be copied to the following:

- Appropriate authority - Chair of the Governing Body
- Local authority – including where the school is an academy
- Diocese – for voluntary aided and voluntary controlled schools
- The person or body responsible for appointing foundation governors if the school has a foundation
- DfE - Academies Advisers Unit [ [colin.diamond@education.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:colin.diamond@education.gsi.gov.uk) ] – for academies