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27 February 2014

Mrs H Leach  
Interim Headteacher  
Cowick Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School  
Snaith Road  
East Cowick  
Goole  
DN14 9DG

Dear Mrs Leach

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Cowick Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School, Goole**

Following my visit to your school on 26 February 2014, 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 November 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.

### **Evidence**

During the visit, discussions were held with you, the headteacher designate, the Chair of the Governing Body and a local authority representative. I also spoke to pupils, teachers and other staff, and reviewed documents, such as the school's action plan, monitoring records of teaching and the latest progress data. I also observed teaching and learning in each of the four classes in the morning and in the afternoon and looked at the work in pupils' books.

### **Context**

Since the section 5 inspection a class teacher has left the school. A temporary replacement has been appointed. The school is collaborating formally with Snaith Primary School and with effect from 1 April 2014 the school will be led by the headteacher from Snaith school.

### **Main findings**

The school's leaders including governors acknowledge that there is a great deal of improvement required before the school can legitimately claim to be providing a good quality of education to pupils. Over time leaders and governors have not been influential

enough in driving school improvement.

The initial indications are that since the recent section 5 inspection the school is making some headway in tackling each of the school's key priorities, although embedding more firmly the role and impact of subject leaders is progressing less rapidly than other aspects. The interim headteacher and the headteacher designate understand the high stakes involved and since the last inspection there has been a considerable amount of work undertaken to tackle the school's issues. Action plans have been developed and are being rolled out with a specific focus on enhancing the quality and consistency of teaching and learning so that pupils' achievement improves to at least good. However, leaders should ensure that they always separate out the responsibility for undertaking actions from the role of evaluating its success to maintain the integrity of the process.

The latest school data indicates that although pupils are generally making faster progress than they were previously there are peaks and troughs within year groups, across subjects and between different groups of pupils with evidence of rapid, mediocre and poor progress apparent. Assessment data is becoming more accurate and is beginning to be used more effectively to plan work that gives pupils a level of challenge relative to their capabilities.

Inspection evidence gleaned from observing lessons, scrutinising work in pupils' books and talking to staff and pupils indicates that teaching is beginning to have a stronger impact on pupils' learning. This is underpinned by the raft of staff training and development that has taken place to enhance staff competence, expectations of what pupils are capable of and the quality of the marking and feedback. A strategy to give pupils frequent chances to use their developing literacy and numeracy skills across a wider range of subjects was evident. Adjustments have been made to the time dedicated to subjects other than English and mathematics to ensure a more equitable balance. Nevertheless, there remains a degree of inconsistency in the impact of teaching on pupils' learning which needs eliminating.

Attendance is improving and persistent absence levels are falling due to the school's good work but number of unauthorised absences is too high and needs tackling. Behaviour was not a cause for concern during this inspection but scrutiny of the records indicates that the school needs to work to reduce the volume of collisions and careless accidents occurring at social times, particularly in the playground and better-manage pupils' exuberance.

A more rigorous approach to monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching has resulted in specific support packages for those staff requiring them and generally tighter performance management. The interim headteacher has brought some stability, direction and rigor to leadership after a period of significant turbulence. She has effectively steadied the ship and instituted much of the groundwork but recognises that substantial further improvements are required if the school is to get to good within the prescribed timescales. Considerable turnover in the membership of the governing body over time has hindered their ability to exercise sustained strategic influence on the school and their impact has been limited. Current governors demonstrate a greater capacity to hold the school's leaders to account. The new Chair is experienced, while several other governors have education backgrounds, and there are others with transferable skills in training and development, and finance. Collectively, this has led to a more savvy and probing approach to governance with more rigorous systems for monitoring and evaluating how much the school is improving and a more accurate view of the school's current effectiveness. Newer governors are receiving

suitable advice, training and guidance to help them undertake their duties more suitably. Governors must build on this and increase their impact and challenge leaders to improve their effectiveness further. The external review of governance has taken place and the recommendations will be adopted.

Ofsted may carry out further visits and, where necessary, provide further support and challenge to the school until its next section 5 inspection. The school should email a termly progress update to the lead inspector.

### **External support**

The school has been in receipt of various local authority support and intervention for a considerable period of time because the school's overall effectiveness has been less than good for a considerable period of time. This support has not led to significant improvement. Whilst more recent actions to bolster leadership, improve teaching and learning, establish more secure and reliable assessment procedures, up-skilling governors and enhancing provision in the Early Years foundation stage are showing initial signs of impact, the acid test will be whether the school improves sufficiently to get to good. Going forward, the local authority must challenge and support the school much more effectively than it has to date.

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

Yours sincerely

John Young  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**