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6 May 2014

Mr Simon Pritchard  
Acting Headteacher  
Crawford Village Primary School  
Crawford Village  
Skelmersdale  
Lancashire  
WN8 9QP

Dear Mr Pritchard

**Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Crawford Village Primary School, Lancashire**

Following my visit to your school on 2 May 2014, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report on the 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 February 2014. 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 in the recent section 5 inspection. The school should take further action to:

- ensure that pupils make good progress across all the years of Key Stage 2
- ensure that the pupil premium is used to meet specific needs of individual pupils
- moderate assessment of standards across the school and track progress regularly
- give children more chance to talk for different purposes and to write at more length
- link with successful schools of similar background to improve teacher development

- prevent bullying, such as name calling
- use measurable baselines and targets in the action plan, that relate to gains for pupils
- gather evidence for performance management of staff in a more systematic way.

With new governors and a full-time headteacher, the school has started to move in the right direction and is now taking appropriate action. However, there is still much to do. For several years, the school has not kept up with improvements elsewhere and needs to catch up. I will be making a further visit as soon as possible to see the impact of actions on learning.

### **Evidence**

During the visit, I met you, three governors and two representatives of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The school action plan was evaluated and details of past performance scrutinised. I considered school documentation: assessment of pupils' achievement; attendance and exclusion records; impact of spending of the pupil premium grant. Jointly with you, I evaluated samples of children's written work and marking in both Key Stages. I met two groups of pupils to talk about their work about changes since inspection. I also talked with pupils playing out at lunchtime.

### **Context**

You started only last week as full-time acting headteacher. A permanent headteacher has recently been appointed, to start in September. This follows two years of uncertainty, of part-time temporary headteachers and almost complete change to membership of the governing body. The current chair of governors was appointed in December 2013 and a programme of training has been put in place for governors since that time.

### **Main findings**

We looked at work in children's books in English and topic work and saw evidence of progress in presentation, handwriting and punctuation. Over a term, we could see how older children were using a wider vocabulary and more varied sentences. In all books we saw, children are writing regularly. However, if older pupils are to achieve higher levels, as stated in the action plan, they need to write at more length, over a wider range of styles and different purposes.

Marking and feedback have improved recently, and we saw examples of children acting on it, to improve spelling of re-write sentences. The simpler 'pupil-friendly' style of feedback you have put in place is starting to bear fruit. It was also clear in books that, until recently, different staff teaching the same child have different styles

of marking. We saw red pen, black pen, post-it notes and highlighting, all corrections and none. This did not help children who were struggling to learn as it was confusing.

Talking with children, they too focused on getting their work accurate and on improving their handwriting. These are very important foundations but not the end product as pupils move up the school. Older children lacked confidence in speaking with me and would benefit from more opportunities to speak and listen in different situations and with other children.

You have assembled and analysed information about pupils' achievements, in the short time you have been here, including information about pupil premium. This information confirms what we saw in books and in talking with pupils. Pupils do improve over time but their progress is not fast enough across all years, especially in Key Stage 2. There is no clear impact of the pupil premium as yet.

Attendance is showing signs of improvement. Parents are now informed regularly about how well their child attends school. There have been no exclusions. Smaller children on several occasions said that they are sometimes bullied by bigger ones, such as name calling or pushing.

Current governors have a good grasp of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They are determined to lead improvement. As one governor said, 'we are passionate about the school', which local people value greatly. Governors recognise the need for change and are keen to have more robust and first hand monitoring. To put this into practice, they have produced a detailed policy for visiting the school, a governor action plan, and training on performance data. The Chair of Governors has been proactive in tracking the actions since inspection.

The action plan was produced before you joined the school. The plan is not robust because it uses too little actual information about performance. There are no baselines saying where the school is now, so it is hard for governors or parents to judge progress. There is not enough focus in the action plan on improving learning and teaching, which should be to the fore.

There was little information available in school about performance management and appraisal of staff. Governors should ensure that systems are in place to gather evidence. The current staffing structure has a relatively large number of part time staff. Some have been on temporary contracts for some time. Governors should get expert advice on the sustainability of this structure and consider how best responsibilities in the action plan can be allocated.

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**

Governors appreciate the local authority's recent support and say that it has been 'excellent'. Since the inspection, the local authority has worked swiftly and well to identify and pay for a full-time acting headteacher. Advisers have supported governors to update their interview processes to attract a good range of applicants for headship. This worked well. A permanent full-time headteacher was appointed last week. A local authority consultant on teaching and learning has begun to support the staff. The external review of governance has not happened yet but is scheduled to take place.

- Local authority support will continue to be needed this term, focussed on linking teachers with current outstanding practice, so that children make faster progress.
- Governors will need expert advice on personnel matters.

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

Yours sincerely

Barbara Comiskey  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**