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17 September 2014

Mrs Ellena Mortimer  
Headteacher  
Bulmer St Andrew's Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School  
Church Road  
Bulmer  
Sudbury  
CO10 7EH

Dear Mrs Mortimer

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Bulmer St Andrew's Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School**

Following my visit to your school on 16 September 2014, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection 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 May 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 identified at the recent section 5 inspection.

### **Evidence**

During the inspection, meetings were held with you, members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The school improvement plan was evaluated. We jointly observed teaching in all three classes and looked together at pupils' writing and mathematics books. We also looked at the school's evaluations of pupils' attainment and progress and records of the quality of teaching.

### **Context**

Since the school was last inspected two teachers have left the school and one has joined. The subject leaders for English and mathematics are new in post. A school improvement board, comprising the headteacher, a core group of governors and

representatives of the local authority and diocese has been established. The improvement board is intended to provide regular monitoring of the school's progress towards becoming good.

## **Main findings**

You and your governing body have acted quickly to improve the quality of teaching and to accelerate pupils' progress, particularly in writing and mathematics. Teaching assistants are now more actively involved in whole class parts of lessons. They readily question pupils about what they are doing and why. They ask pupils how they can improve their work and expect answers to be acted on. Teachers encourage pupils to discuss their work and share ideas. As a result pupils are becoming increasingly confident and more willing to answer questions. While the school's evaluations of the quality of teaching are detailed and accurate, targets for improvement are not explicitly followed up in later observations of teaching, so that it is unclear whether or not teachers have improved their practice. The quality of marking is improving, it is more detailed and tells pupils not only how well they are doing but what they need to do better. Pupils now respond more readily and use the teachers' comments to help them improve their writing and mathematics. Some of the marking, particularly for older pupils is of high quality. Pupils have more opportunities to assess their own and their classmates work and set themselves targets to achieve. There have been some quick gains in improving the overall presentation of pupils' work but improving pupils' handwriting is taking longer to achieve.

Your meetings with teachers to monitor the progress of individual pupils are now more frequent. These meetings are proving effective in identifying who is doing well and who needs additional support. There is emerging evidence of the success of the school's actions to accelerate pupils' progress, for example in helping some older pupils understand basic number bonds and computation. Information on pupils' progress each term should be shared more widely to keep governors and subject leaders better informed. The longer term tracking and sharing of pupils' progress data is well established.

The school has produced a thorough and detailed improvement plan. It has a sharp focus on the areas for improvement identified in the most recent inspection report and in subsequent reviews of pupil premium funding. While most success criteria are appropriate some simply reword the school's actions while others fail to make the essential link between the school's actions and the intended impact on pupils' achievement.

At the time of the last inspection pupils' behaviour was judged to be good and this continues to be the case. Older pupils are able to work with good focus and sustained concentration. They have positive attitudes to their work, are industrious and play and work together well.

The recent independent review of governance was positive about most aspects of its work. However, the governing body has been quick to act on its recommendations, such as exploring opportunities to work with other governing bodies in order to share best practice. The recommendations from the review have informed a number of actions for the governing body in the school development plan. Governors have been equally positive in responding to the review of pupil premium funding. The impact of additional funding on the achievement of this group of pupils is now an explicit focus for governors' visits, with the link governors for English and mathematics taking a lead. The school website is being redeveloped, with changes already made to the pages about the governing body and pupil premium. Governors are open to suggestions and are well informed about how well the school is doing. They are eager to improve further and have planned a significant programme of training, including jointly with staff, for the year ahead.

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 school has valued the support provided by the local authority excellence commissioner. She helped the school plan its early response to the inspection report and provides strategic challenge and support through membership of the improvement board. The school works closely with the Colne Valley Consortium of schools and is eager to develop this link further.

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

Yours sincerely

Robert Lovett  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**