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17 November 2014

Miss Debra Meekings  
Acting Headteacher  
Bolton Parish Church CofE Primary School  
Kestor Street  
Bolton  
Lancashire  
BL2 2AN

Dear Miss Meekings

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Bolton Parish Church of England Primary School, Bolton**

Following my visit to your school on 14 November 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 September 2014. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. At its previous section 5 inspection the school was also judged to require improvement.

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, I held meetings with you and with Karen Bramwell, the executive headteacher. I met with four representatives from the Governing Body, with an adviser from the diocese and with one from the local authority. I also met with the leader of the school's Early Years provision. We visited each class and discussed the changes that you have made since September. I evaluated your school improvement plan and scrutinised documents relating to the actions you have taken so far to improve teaching, behaviour and attendance.

## **Context**

Since the section 5 inspection in September, the senior leader with responsibility for co-ordinating provision for pupils who are disabled or have special educational needs, has returned from maternity leave.

## **Main findings**

You have undertaken a substantial amount of work since the section 5 inspection, and this is having a noticeable, positive impact, on improving all aspects of the school's work. Your clear-sighted, analytical approach to evaluating the school's provision has informed your plans for improvement. You have rightly prioritised ensuring the safety of children, both by securing the school site and by establishing firm protocols for registering pupils and following-up any absences. You have provided all staff with safeguarding and child protection training so that they are clear about their responsibilities. You are scrupulous in ensuring that there is a shared responsibility for recording and improving attendance. For example, you have changed the start to the school day, to ensure that pupils enter their classes early and begin learning quickly. Consequently, punctuality is improving and attendance is now broadly in line with the national average.

You have provided teaching staff with relevant professional development. This has focussed on improving planning and on establishing a system of effective assessment. Teachers' plans now include clear success criteria for pupils of different abilities. Teachers have all had the opportunity to link up with an outstanding professional in your link partner school. This has enabled your teachers to see, in practice, what is expected of them and what their pupils can achieve. For example, your Early Year's practitioners are now enabling children to practice reading, and writing out sounds and letters at an earlier stage. You monitor teaching regularly and carefully. Your feedback focusses on how well teachers have enabled groups of pupils to make progress in their learning. The full impact of this has yet to be seen, but you report that teachers are responding positively to the increased levels of accountability and support they are receiving.

You have worked with the diocese to conduct a full review of provision for pupils' religious education and for their social, moral and spiritual development. This has highlighted some significant shortcomings in this area that you are now quickly tackling. The deputy headteacher has responsibility for improving this aspect of the school's work and, together, you have drafted new policies to guide the work of staff. You now have a schedule for assemblies, which are informed by Christian values; for example, this term pupils are learning about respect and peace. The importance of these values is reflected in each classroom through a values tree and reflective prayer areas.

You have worked hard to develop new ways of engaging with parents, and their feedback shows that they appreciate this. Information evenings have given parents

detailed feedback on their children's progress, behaviour and attendance. Parents also receive appropriate information about their children's targets and how they can help to support their learning at home. You have put in place a programme for developing all school leaders, and they are all following nationally accredited qualifications. This is helping to build leadership capacity across the school.

Governors have recently commissioned a review of their effectiveness, which has included a full audit of their skills. This recognises their strong sense of commitment to the school and their determination to lead it through to the next stage of its development. They recognise that the information they have received in the past has not always been accurate. They have worked quickly to secure the short-term leadership of the school with your appointment and with the partnership with St Paul's Church of England Primary School. However, they recognise that the longer-term leadership of the school needs resolving and are working closely with the diocese and the local authority to conclude this.

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 and diocese have both worked closely with governors to secure the current leadership of the school. This has been extremely effective in bringing about rapid improvement. Both advisers meet regularly with governors on a raising achievement group, which directly holds leaders to account for the pace of change and the impact of actions to improve the school. This has the added benefit of developing governors' expertise in both challenging and supporting school leaders.

I am copying this letter to John Wallington, the Chair of the Governing Body, to Ms Margaret Asquith, the Director of Children's and Adult's Services for Bolton, and Canon M Smith, the Director of Education for the diocese of Manchester.

Yours sincerely

Philippa Darley

**Her Majesty's Inspector**