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26 February 2015

Mrs Rebecca Martin  
Headteacher  
Birkenshaw Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School  
Station Lane  
Birkenshaw  
Bradford  
West Yorkshire  
BD11 2JE

Dear Mrs Martin

**Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Birkenshaw Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School, Kirklees.**

Following my visit to your school on 25 February 2015, 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 November 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. The school should take further action to:

- provide more detail in improvement plans about when actions should be evaluated and by whom and what success would look like for those pupils who should make better than expected progress
- ensure governors act promptly to implement any required actions identified in the planned review of governance.

## **Evidence**

During the visit, I met with the headteacher, senior and middle leaders, a group of pupils, governors and representatives of the local authority and diocese. I evaluated a range of documentation including the school improvement plan. In addition, I undertook a tour of the school, visiting classrooms and speaking with pupils.

## **Main findings**

Work carried out by the headteacher and other senior and middle leaders and staff to improve the school has continued at an increased pace since the last inspection. They are building on previous improvements, sharpening their focus, introducing greater rigour to their monitoring and engaging key people in the process. This is leading to a shift in the culture of the school where by all staff are more accountable and planned changes are put into place and monitored with greater urgency. Senior and middle leaders feel they are well supported and have a shared understanding of what needs to be done to improve. Challenge and support is being provided where teachers' performance requires further improvement.

Actions to improve teaching and learning are being prioritised. The leadership team and staff work together to formulate and carry out a number of improvements. These include making sure that pupils are more aware of their targets and what they mean. Teachers use this information to better plan their lessons whilst training has been put in place to ensure teaching is more responsive to individual pupils' needs that emerge during lessons. Pupils' learning is further supported by a more effective system for checking their work and identifying what they need to do to improve. As a result, pupils say they enjoy lessons and engage well with their learning. The progress being made by pupils is increasingly evident in their books. Most pupils know what they need to do to improve their work and they welcome the greater challenge in lessons. There is, on occasion, insufficient time for pupils to respond to comments made by teachers in their books and opportunities to revisit and embed learning are missed.

Systems to check on the quality of teaching and learning have been strengthened. Recent reviews show that the quality of teaching is improving. There are regular reviews of how well pupils are achieving and staff are held to account for the progress their pupils are making. As a consequence, interventions to support individuals and groups of learners are now timelier and better targeted, leading to more rapid improvements in pupil's achievement.

The school improvement plan addresses all of the areas identified in the recent inspection and prioritises actions linked to improving teaching and learning. Clear actions and timelines are supported by a regular and robust monitoring process to ensure actions are completed on time. How the impact of these actions will be evaluated is less clear. Success criteria are rightly focused on outcomes for pupils and the quality of teaching and learning, however, they lack sufficient detail about what success may look like in the shorter term. In addition, the intended outcomes

lack sufficient detail about those pupils that should make better than expected progress including those that need to catch up. This means that governors cannot always pinpoint how well the school is improving over time. Nonetheless, actions taken to date are beginning to have an impact on the achievement of pupils.

The governing body has responded positively to the outcomes of the last inspection and has a full and active knowledge of what the school is doing to improve. This is because the governors have been fully engaged with the development and review of recent actions to address the areas for improvement. They have held regular meetings to focus on planning the necessary improvements and set up a monitoring group to continue this work. Governors are involved in the life of the school through regular and focused visits. As a result, governors have a knowledge and understanding of the impact of the current actions the school is taking. A review of governance and a review of the use of pupil premium funding are now timetabled but have not yet taken place. Governors recognise the need to implement the learning from these reviews as a matter of urgency to ensure they can keep pace with developments in the rest of the school.

### **External support**

The school has strong links within a local partnership of schools, including close links with two good schools. This has contributed to an accurate understanding of the school's own strengths and weaknesses. It has also provided support for teachers and school leaders in continuing to develop their roles.

The local authority believes the school has the capacity to rapidly improve. It monitors the progress the school is making on a regular basis. It has supported the development of school improvement plans and programmed a review of governance.

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

Yours sincerely

Jonathan Brown

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

The letter should be copied to the following:

- Appropriate authority - Chair of the Governing Body/Interim Executive Board
- Local authority – including where the school is an academy
- Diocese – for voluntary aided and voluntary controlled schools