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1 October 2014

Mr R Bullock  
Executive Headteacher  
Cotford St Luke Primary School  
Bethell Mead  
Cotford St Luke  
Taunton  
TA4 1HZ

Dear Mr Bullock

**Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Cotford St Luke Primary School**

Following my visit to your school on 30 September 2014, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report 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 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. The school should take further action to:

- ensure that the actions to improve the school are monitored and evaluated more frequently by the governing body and school leaders against clearly defined success criteria so that progress can be plotted easily and accurately
- use the outcomes from the external review of governance, further training and the Ofsted survey report, *'School Governance: Learning from the Best'* to support the work of the governing body in evaluating the performance of the school and holding leaders to account
- ensure that the school's website contains all the appropriate information and that the school reports in greater detail about the use of the pupil premium and the sports funding.

## **Evidence**

To evaluate the action taken since the last inspection, meetings were held with you, senior leaders, members of the governing body and the Senior Primary Adviser for Somerset. I undertook a series of short visits to lessons, looked at pupils' books and a range of school documentation about the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement. The school improvement plan was also evaluated.

## **Context**

Since the last section 5 inspection, you have been appointed as an executive headteacher until the substantive headteacher post is filled. You attend Cotford St Luke Primary School two days a week and spend the other three days at Bishops Hull Primary School as headteacher. Senior leadership roles have been redefined. Two teachers left the school in July 2014 and were replaced by two newly qualified teachers in September 2014. Local authority officers have undertaken external moderation reviews of pupils' work in the Early Years Foundation Stage, Year 2 and Year 6.

## **Main findings**

You have used the inspection points for improvement and information about the school to construct a draft improvement plan that has a good focus on the key things that need to be done first, to quickly move the school forward to being good or better. It shows how these actions will be measured in the longer-term. What it lacks are clearly defined, small steps that can be plotted easily and accurately allowing progress against the different actions, and most importantly any slippage, to be quickly spotted and resolved. In addition, references and links to the governing body are not precise enough to ensure that they hold the school to account and are fully involved in measuring the school's performance, including their own.

The external review of governance recommended following the previous inspection has taken place and the governing body has reorganised. At this early stage it is not possible to determine how effective the new structure will be. The governing body needs further training on how to steer the school strategically. They and teachers need to be updated on the changes to government policies and procedures, for example the new curriculum, the most effective ways of spending the pupil premium and the changes for the support for pupils with disabilities and/or special educational needs.

Subject and area leaders have been given more time to develop the teaching in their areas of responsibility. In mathematics, this extra time has been used to improve the skills of the teaching assistants through training in mathematical concepts, raising their understanding and involving them more in the development of learning aids that are specific for the groups of pupils that they work with. For example, they have made counting sticks with buttons on to show the increases in number by ones and hexagons when counting in sixes. As a consequence, teaching assistants are developing their questioning techniques and improving the quality of their responses

to pupils by using more informative and accurate vocabulary. During my visit the leader for mathematics had been investigating the use of a bar model to solve an addition problem. This was causing great excitement for the pupil involved, other teaching colleagues and a teaching assistant who came to see how she could use the same model with her group. Improvements are also happening in other areas. In English pupils are using 'polishing pens' to improve their work and the marking in the books seen was informative with good levels of communication between teachers and pupils.

The senior leadership team and other leaders now have more responsibility to hold their team to account. The new system for lesson observation and sharing best practice within the school and shared expertise from your own school was seen by all those I spoke with as a real catalyst for school improvement. From the evidence seen during my visit, I concur. Your expectation that all staff are responsible for improving pupils' achievement is beginning to take hold. You explained very clearly to everyone involved in the school why it was not providing a good education, where pupils' results were not good enough and how each person could make a difference, including how they could do it. This was a significant challenge to some of your colleagues, but there is a palpable renewed vigour and enthusiasm throughout the school.

The school's website does not meet current government requirements. For example, the required details about the use of the sports funding grant, the reading schemes used by the school, the curriculum and important policies are on not on it. In addition, the information about the spending of the pupil premium and its impact on the achievement of the pupils supported by this additional funding is insufficient.

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 is getting good external support from a local leader of education. Governors have received some training to support their professional development but need more to help them focus on their strategic role. Through visits and shared working with your own school you are providing good opportunities for teaching staff to see the very best practice, help teachers to assess pupils work more accurately and develop their own teaching. The governing body would benefit from working with other effective governing bodies in the local authority.

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

Yours sincerely

Steffi Penny  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**