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Mr P Hume  
Headteacher  
Church Hill Middle School  
Wood Piece Lane  
Church Hill  
Redditch  
B98 9LR

Dear Mr Hume

### **Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools: monitoring inspection of Church Hill Middle School**

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 23 June 2011, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during the inspection. Please pass on my thanks to the staff and pupils who contributed to discussions.

Since the last inspection, the school roll has fallen slightly and the school forecasts a further reduction in the number of pupils joining the school in September 2011. The proportion of students known to be eligible for free school meals, already above average, has risen further. Since the last inspection, the school's specialist information and communications technology teacher has left and another member of staff has been trained to fulfil this role. Senior leadership arrangements are the same as at the time of the last inspection. Since the last inspection, the school has secured the Leading Parent Partnership Award and the International Schools Bronze Award.

As a result of the inspection on 15 September 2009, the school was asked to address the most important areas for improvement which are set out in the annex to this letter.

Having considered all the evidence, I am of the opinion that at this time the school has made satisfactory progress in making improvements and satisfactory progress in demonstrating a better capacity for sustained improvement.

Pupils' attainment is broadly average and their progress satisfactory. Rates of progress to the end of Year 8 have improved, both in English and in mathematics. In English, strategies to strengthen pupils' skills in reading and writing have had a clear impact in raising attainment, particularly for lower attaining pupils and those with

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special educational needs and/or disabilities. In mathematics, many pupils, particularly girls and those identified by the school to be gifted and talented, make good and sometimes outstanding progress. Strategies to accelerate the progress of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities have not had sufficient impact in mathematics.

Despite these clear improvements, there remains too much variation in achievement between subjects and year groups. For example, in last year's national tests, not enough lower and middle ability pupils in Year 6 secured the expected level of attainment in English, while more-able pupils achieved well. Conversely, in mathematics, while high proportions of pupils secured the expected level of attainment, not enough of the more-able pupils secured Level 5. School data indicates that achievement in the foundation subjects is also variable.

The monitoring visit took place during curriculum enhancement week and short visits were made to six sessions. Pupils thrived in the majority of these sessions, especially when they could see the practical relevance of the activities in which they were engaged. For example, Year 8 pupils worked extremely well to devise their own cake-making businesses, competing in groups to see who could make the most profit through cake sales to pupils and parents and carers at the neighbouring school. In sessions which were delivered less effectively, pupils were not sufficiently well engaged.

Pupils report that behaviour is generally satisfactory, although older pupils said there is still too much variation in behaviour between different lessons. School analysis of incidents of poor behaviour confirms this view. The introduction of the behaviour recovery room has had a positive impact in reducing the proportion of pupils subject to fixed term exclusions, which is now average. Pupils report that they feel safe in school and younger pupils, especially, feel the school does a good job in dealing well with the small number of bullying incidents. Older pupils, however, express the view that not all bullying is dealt with equally effectively. More robust strategies to tackle poor attendance have had a clear impact, particularly in reducing the proportion of pupils who are persistent absentees.

Leaders and managers have secured improvements to the quality of teaching, with the result that more lessons than before are securing good progress. Expectations with regard to teachers' practice have been sharpened and accompanied by a clearer focus on precise strategies to accelerate progress in lessons. Some pupils, particularly in the older year groups, reported that good teaching is not consistent enough. For example, while all pupils reported how much they enjoy science, older pupils said that some subjects were characterised by mundane and repetitive activities. Clear improvements to the quality of marking mean that pupils are able to explain how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve, particularly in English and mathematics. In some subjects, while marking is completed regularly and provides good encouragement, it is not sufficiently diagnostic in identifying how well pupils are developing their subject-specific skills and how they can improve.



Strategies to track pupils' progress have improved and systems to record pupils' achievement are more consistent than before. As a result, staff understand more clearly how well individuals and groups of pupils are achieving. This means that underachievement is now identified and addressed more quickly. Improved use of data has also added greater rigour to the analysis of pupil performance. Information is used increasingly well to inform action planning and evaluations of performance. However, subject action plans do not articulate clearly enough the expected impact of intended actions to raise achievement.

While it is too early for the impact of the several improvements to be seen in consistently good outcomes for pupils, these important developments, underpinned by accurate self-evaluation of the school's strengths and areas for improvement, demonstrate the school's satisfactorily strengthened capacity to sustain further improvement.

The school has received satisfactory support from the local authority. Leaders and managers have particularly valued the support provided to help the school maintain and strengthen provision for information and communications technology following the departure of the school's specialist teacher. Support has also been provided to help teachers moderate their assessments of pupils' progress in English and mathematics.

I hope that you have found the inspection helpful in promoting improvement in your school. This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Daniel Burton  
Her Majesty's Inspector

## **Annex**

### **The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in September 2009**

- Establish a system to track pupils' progress consistently across key stages and subjects so that underachievement is swiftly identified.
- Make sure that pupils know how well they are doing.
- Improve the quality of teaching so that lessons are planned to meet the needs of pupils of different abilities and standards are raised.
- Ensure that school leaders analyse information rigorously so that their findings inform evaluation of performance and planning.