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4 April 2014

Janet McMurdo  
Executive Headteacher  
Oundle and King's Cliffe Middle School  
Cotterstock Road  
Oundle  
Peterborough  
PE8 5HA

Dear Mrs McMurdo

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Oundle and King's Cliffe Middle School**

Following my visit to your school on 3 April 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 second monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in April 2013. 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:

- increase achievement in year 5
- increase achievement in reading
- devise and implement plans to improve the achievement of those who are eligible for pupil premium funding

### **Evidence**

During the visit, meetings were held with you, your head of school, and three representatives of the governing body to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. I also had a telephone conversation with a representative of the local authority. The school action plan was evaluated. I conducted a learning walk at both the Oundle and King's Cliffe sites and evaluated achievement data.

## **Context**

Five teachers have left the school since I visited in November. Another four teachers will leave the school by the end of the academic year. You currently have several teachers who are either employed on a supply basis or on short-term contracts. Your local council is considering whether the structure of education provision should remain as it is or switch to a primary/secondary model. As a middle school, this is causing you and your colleagues some concern which has contributed to staff turnover.

## **Main findings**

One of the main challenges you have faced since my last visit in November is instability in terms of staffing. However, you continue to focus on improving the quality of teaching and all members of staff benefit from robust performance management. The school's 'Leaders of Learning' support new and temporary staff to help ensure that standards of teaching improve and that the school's approaches to teaching are followed. More regular moderation of work is taking place to help maintain the accuracy of progress data.

You have made improving pupils' achievement in mathematics your main priority. A teacher from a good, local school has offered support in this regard and her impact has been positive on both teachers and pupils.

Year 6 schemes of work have changed to focus more on developing skills. Much of the school's efforts have gone into mathematics and into Year 6 specifically. This has meant that other areas of the school have not developed as well. It is important that achievement in reading improves quickly across the school. A new scheme to promote wider reading will begin in the summer term. Teachers of English are being directed to increase learning opportunities in this area.

Marking has improved since my last visit, though best practice is more evident in years 5 and 6 than years 7 and 8.

The 'Big Write' strategy has been used; this has begun to have a positive impact on the quality of writing in humanities subjects.

Teaching assistants are now performance managed more closely, and they benefit from training conducted with local schools. This is beginning to have a positive impact on their practice, though it is not yet consistent.

The school tracks pupil progress well. This has identified underachievement of those eligible for pupil premium funding. The school should implement improvement plans for this particular group of pupils as a priority.

Attitudes to learning were positive throughout both learning walks; the behaviour of the students seen was consistently good.

You have made the King's Cliffe site a more attractive environment for both teachers and pupils. Leaders of learning and other senior staff do not visit the site as often as they should.

Governors have increased their level of challenge to the headteacher and to other senior leaders. To help them do this, individual governors have had training on achievement data and on financial management. A new working group has been created to oversee the achievement of those eligible for pupil premium funding though it is too early to judge any impact. Governors do not record notes of visit; because of this, it is more difficult to assess governors' impact on school improvement.

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**

Your local authority representative helped to arrange support in the teaching of mathematics from a good, local school. This has had a positive impact on pupil achievement in this subject area.

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

Yours sincerely

Ian McNeilly  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**