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Paul Essenhigh  
Executive Headteacher  
Catshill Middle School  
Meadow Road  
Catshill  
Bromsgrove  
B61 0JW

Dear Mr Essenhigh

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Catshill Middle School**

Following my visit to your school on 8 October 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 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:

- make sure that all of the success criteria in the action plan are written clearly so that progress can be easily evaluated
- develop further the opportunities for pupils to complete pieces of extended writing
- continue to improve the quality of pupils' writing skills, particularly in relation to grammar, spelling and punctuation.

### **Evidence**

During the inspection, I met with you, the Head of School, the Chair of the Governing Body and three other members, and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. I also evaluated the

school's action plan. Together, we made short visits to a number of classrooms and I reviewed documentation related to various aspects of the school's work.

## **Context**

Since the section 5 inspection, a new assistant headteacher joined the school in September to replace a colleague who retired at the end of term. A teacher of mathematics also started this term. Currently, the Head of School is also leading on the teaching of English and you are seeking a permanent appointment to this leadership role.

## **Main findings**

You and your team have taken quick and decisive action to tackle the areas identified at the section 5 inspection. A good action plan has been written that focuses on what needs to happen. The role that governors have in monitoring the progress of the school is incorporated well into the plan. We discussed the need to sharpen some of the success criteria in the plan so that planned actions can be easily measured for impact.

The school's evidence shows that improvements to the quality of teaching are beginning to bear fruit. In my short visit to classrooms I could see that the quality of written feedback to pupils has improved in some year groups and for some subjects. I saw particularly strong marking in some English books. However, your records and my observations highlight that there is still work to do to make sure that this effective practice is consistent across the school. You are tackling weak teaching by a combination of sensible whole-school and individual training for teachers, and the school's performance management systems. The Head of School has identified opportunities for more extended writing across the curriculum and is compiling good evidence of what is working well and where gaps exist.

The 2014 Key Stage 2 results highlighted concerns about the current Year 7 pupils' progress in mathematics and reading. These pupils have been at your school for only two of the four years of the key stage. Similarly, the test results showed that these pupils did not do well in the grammar, punctuation and spelling test. The school's data also shows that the development of pupils' writing skills across the year groups is a high priority. You and your team are addressing these weaknesses through additional support for pupils and more specific training for teachers.

Leaders have worked closely with the local high school to standardise the level of pupils' skills by the end of Year 8. Your records show that the pupils who left in the summer of 2014 made more progress, particularly in English, than was the case for previous year groups.

Already this term you have increased the levels of accountability for middle leaders. This is to make sure that these leaders are improving the quality of teaching and

pupils' learning in the subjects for which they are responsible. Senior leaders are also reinforcing with teachers the importance of considering the impact of their work over time.

Governors are intrinsically involved in the monitoring and evaluation of the school's work and are gathering more first-hand evidence to help them with this. They continue to provide good challenge to senior leaders.

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 is providing a high level of support that is focused on the key areas for improvement and leaders describe this to be of good quality. There is regular monitoring of the school's progress. However, the minutes of these meetings are not consistently evaluative.

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

Yours sincerely

James McNeillie  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**