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Mr A Harding  
Executive Headteacher  
Perton Middle School  
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Perton  
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Staffordshire  
WV6 7NR

Dear Mr Harding

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

Following my visit to your school on 26 April 2016, 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 June 2015. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005. At its previous section 5 inspection in June 2013, the school was also judged to require improvement.

Senior leaders and governors are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection in order to become a good school.

The school should take further action to:

- ensure leadership capacity within the senior team is maintained over the long term to continue to successfully implement key development priorities
- make sure that effective actions are taken to narrow gaps in all year groups in progress, attainment and attendance between disadvantaged pupils and other pupils in the school and nationally.

## **Evidence**

During the inspection, meetings were held with you, the associate headteacher and other senior and middle leaders, governors and representatives of the local authority to discuss the actions taken since the last inspection. I undertook brief visits to a number of lessons, accompanied by the associate headteacher, and looked at examples of pupils' work. I evaluated a range of documents and records, including the school's improvement plan and leaders' evaluations of teaching and learning. Other documents scrutinised included reports of external reviews of the use of pupil premium funding and the governing body.

## **Context**

Since the previous inspection in June 2015, you have become executive headteacher of the Codsall High Federation of Schools. You appointed a senior leader from Codsall Community High School as associate headteacher of Perton Middle School and restructured the senior leadership team. The associate headteacher has been working at the school full time until recently, however this has now reduced to three days a week. The governing body are seeking to appoint a permanent head of school to start in September 2016 but have not yet found the right candidate, despite their best efforts.

## **Main findings**

You have established a clear purpose and vision for the school and are well supported in measures to achieve this by able senior leaders and governors. Support and effective action have been provided by the local authority. You have changed the structure and roles of the senior leadership team and temporarily seconded an experienced senior leader from Codsall Community High School. As a result of the actions you have already taken, improvement is being secured in the school. For example, leaders and governors now have an accurate and detailed view of the school's strengths and know what needs to be done to tackle areas requiring further development.

Leaders have improved the way pupils' outcomes are assessed by successfully introducing a new system. Middle leaders use progress information to identify pupils who require additional support. As a result, teachers now more accurately target strategies to make sure that pupils who have fallen behind catch up with their peers. However, whole-school evaluation of the impact of interventions targeted specifically at disadvantaged pupils has not taken place. Consequently, leaders do not have a clear picture of which strategies used have the most benefit. Gaps still exist between the progress and attainment of disadvantaged pupils and their peers and all pupils nationally.

Teachers have swiftly responded to leaders' expectations to make sure they have a consistent approach in lessons. As a result, there have been improvements in teaching. Teachers use assessment information well to track pupils' progress and ensure learning activities are matched to the different abilities of pupils across the school. Teachers now have high expectations for the quality of pupils' work and make it clear what needs to be learned during lessons. The impact of this is that the standards of presentation of work, including handwriting, have improved and pupils are able to explain how their work develops their learning. However, there are still some pockets of inconsistency where the purpose of learning is less clear and pupils' work is not presented as tidily as it could be.

Pupils now have more opportunities to develop their writing in a wide range of subjects. Teachers within different departments focus on different key aspects of grammar and punctuation. Pupils benefit from these areas of focus and are using more consistent approaches to structure and develop their writing. For example, Year 8 pupils were being taught to use a structure to write a conclusion to a practical activity carried out in science. The same practice was also seen in English where a group of pupils were responding to the text they had read. At this time, there are fewer opportunities for pupils to develop and consolidate their mathematical skills across a wide range of subjects. As a result, pupils' numeracy development takes place mainly in mathematics lessons. For example, in a Year 7 mathematics lesson pupils, including the most able, were required to think carefully and use their knowledge and skills to solve equations at a level of challenge appropriate for their starting points.

The impact of effective external support to improve middle leaders' skills has been good. Key middle leaders have successfully improved their skills in monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching and learning within their subject areas. These leaders are now more confident in the analysis of pupil assessment information. While the initial focus of middle leaders has been to prepare Year 6 pupils for external assessments, their approach needs to be extended so pupils in all year groups benefit.

Leaders have made sure that the external review of the use of pupil premium funding recommended at the last inspection has been carried out. The report identified how disadvantaged pupils benefit from whole-school strategies, such as clear expectations for the standard of work they produce. However, the report did not explain how leaders should distinguish provision to specifically meet the needs of disadvantaged pupils or how this should be evaluated. Subsequently, this aspect of leaders' improvement work has not been as effective as other areas.

Governance has improved since the previous inspection. Governors commissioned an external review of their work and have acted in response to the recommendations. A new structure of sub-committees has been created which are linked to the schools within the federation.

Governors now have a more sharply focused view of the school and better understand its strengths and weaknesses. For example, governors now recognise that pupils were not making enough progress before the previous inspection and address this issue through their questions to leaders. Governors have carried out a self-assessment of their knowledge and skills and have used this information to identify training and development needs. Training has not yet taken place to improve how governors use the information they have about how well pupils are doing compared to other pupils nationally. Consequently, governors are not yet in a position to hold school leaders fully to account. Nevertheless, leaders present governors with information about pupils' progress in a more useful way and this is enabling them to provide better challenge and support.

Ofsted may carry out further monitoring inspections and, where necessary, provide further support and challenge to the school until its next section 5 inspection.

### **External support**

Effective external support has been provided by the local authority. The local authority's commissioner regularly reviews the progress leaders make towards the areas for development identified at the last inspection. She has also commissioned an external consultant to work with key middle leaders in the school. Support provided by the external consultant has resulted in improved monitoring of progress of pupils through analysis of assessment information, scrutiny of pupils' work and observation of lessons. Middle leaders now successfully target interventions, particularly for Year 6 pupils, to improve rates of progress and support teachers to ensure that work in class is appropriately challenging.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, and the director of children's services for Staffordshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Rob Hackfath  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**