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Mr S Burns  
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Dear Mr Burns

### **Implementation of Catshill Middle School's Action Plan**

Following the visit of Mrs C Munt HMI, Mr A Watters HMI and Mrs J Jones, Additional Inspector, to your school on 13 and 14 June 2005, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to confirm the inspection findings which are recorded in the attached note.

The visit was the fifth monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures. The focus of the inspection was to assess: the pupils' standards of attainment and their progress; the quality of education provided; the leadership and management of the school; the pupils' attitudes and behaviour; and the progress that has been made in implementing the action plan.

The school has made limited progress since the last monitoring inspection and limited progress overall since being subject to special measures.

I am copying this letter and the note of the inspection findings to the Secretary of State, the chair of governors and the Director of Educational Services for Worcestershire. This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Andrew Reid  
Head of Institutional Inspection and Framework Division

## **IMPLEMENTATION OF CATSHILL MIDDLE SCHOOL'S ACTION PLAN**

### Findings of the fifth monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures

During the visit 24 lessons or parts of lessons, three registration sessions and an assembly were inspected. Meetings were held with the headteacher, the chair of governors, the deputy and assistant headteachers, other senior teachers and a representative from the LEA. Informal discussions were held with other members of staff and with pupils and samples of work were examined. A range of documents was scrutinised. Using this evidence, HMI made the following observations to the headteacher, the chair of the governors, the senior management team and the representative from the LEA.

In 19 out of the 24 lessons standards were judged to be in line with or better than the levels expected for the pupils' ages. In nearly all lessons at Key Stage 2 the pupils' attainment was at the level expected for their age; at Key Stage 3 standards met the age-related expectations in 11 lessons but were below in four lessons. Although some of the higher-attaining pupils are reaching good and very good standards which are above the levels expected for their age, there is underachievement in many subjects.

The quality of teaching and learning was very good in two lessons, good in eight, satisfactory in ten, unsatisfactory in three lessons and poor in one lesson. Although the proportion of satisfactory and better teaching has remained broadly the same as at the previous inspection, there has been a significant fall in the proportion of good and very good lessons. In three of the satisfactory lessons strengths in the teaching only just outweighed the weaknesses. The teaching at Key Stage 2 was better than at Key Stage 3.

In the best lessons the teachers' subject knowledge was very good, expectations of the pupils' behaviour and their academic attainment were high and questions were used effectively to probe the pupils' understanding and challenge their thinking. Learning objectives were used well to underpin the pupils' activities and were linked to their individual targets, particularly for the pupils who have special educational needs. Opportunities were taken to identify cross-curricular links, subject-specific vocabulary was taught well, for example, in design and technology and science. Small group and partner activities focused effectively on the pupils' speaking skills and required them to work together to reach agreement and make decisions.

In the weaker and unsatisfactory and poor lessons, the pupils' work was not matched well to their different learning needs, expectations were far too low, the pace of learning was very slow and behaviour management strategies were ineffective. Too much time was wasted dealing with low-level disruption and pupils who constantly talked while teachers were instructing the class were generally tolerated and ignored.

The pupils' learning was directly linked to the quality of teaching: it was very good in two lessons, good in eight, satisfactory in ten, unsatisfactory in three and poor in one. More consistent teaching of English in Year 8 led to the pupils making better progress than was the case in February. Examples of good quality, creative writing, linked to science, were displayed and referred to in assembly. The school is developing a suitable programme of activities to meet the needs of more able, gifted and talented pupils. However, in too many lessons there was insufficient challenge for the most-able pupils. Two heads of year are on a certificated course that has the potential to help the school to implement the "Every Child Matters" agenda more effectively. Although in many respects the role of the year leaders is developing appropriately, the information held by them is not used effectively enough to inform the core team about the improvements in the pupils' learning.

An analysis of the timetables shows that the length of teaching time for pupils in Key Stage 3 is too short. No allowance is made for movement between lessons which further reduces overall lesson time. Many lessons started later than the stated time with the result that much valuable teaching time was lost. This is unacceptable.

The headteacher's assembly supported the development of positive attitudes to work and promoted the pupils' creative talents sensitively. The staff and the pupils were invited to appreciate the creative talents evident within the school community. The attitudes of the pupils to learning and their behaviour were satisfactory or better in 20 out of the 24 lessons; they were very good in two lessons, good in eight lessons and satisfactory in ten. Unsatisfactory progress and inappropriate attitudes occurred in four lessons. In these lessons the teaching did not engage the pupils' attention, the level of work was low and the management of behaviour was weak.

The pupils' behaviour around the school was less impressive than on previous visits with a significant amount of noise and restlessness in corridors. Behaviour around the school is the responsibility of all staff, although two teaching assistants have particular responsibilities. However, when teachers and assistants were busy in their classrooms preparing for lessons some incidents went unchecked. The school is working with the behaviour support team to improve matters. Expectations of behaviour have been clarified and shared with the pupils and displayed in classrooms. The weekly behaviour focus is referred to in assemblies. There has been a total of 85 exclusion days, involving 20 pupils, this year. It is reported that the number of incidences related to physical violence has decreased.

The management of information and communication technology (ICT) has continued to develop suitably this term. However, the leadership of this subject, and that of history and geography, is uncertain for next year. The management of literacy and mathematics is progressing well and there are clear indications that the key stage leaders are working effectively together to improve transition procedures when pupils enter and leave the school and between the two key stages. These subject leaders are developing a clearer idea of the strengths and weaknesses in

teaching and in the standards that are being achieved. In science there is less clarity about these matters and there is a greater reliance on external support. Although the school continues to develop its assessment procedures and computerised tracking system, information is not collected consistently across the core subjects. It is not analysed, evaluated or synthesised with sufficient rigour. Consequently, it fails to provide a clear enough overview of standards, achievement and progress in each year group or for particular groups of pupils. There is no whole-school data, for example, about the achievement of boys and girls or the rates of pupils' progress.

Weaknesses in the way the school is led and managed continue to impede the progress being made. The self evaluation form has provided the subject leaders and senior managers with an opportunity to discuss improvement issues. However, the information provided was too descriptive and some of the judgements relating to standards were inaccurate. There is still a lack of coherence in the management of routines and expectations, for example, some teachers registered pupils at the start of every lesson and others did not. Unhelpful variations in approach were also evident in relation to curriculum assessment, standards and progress. As the oversight of these areas resides with the subject leaders, the headteacher and the senior management team are not developing a sufficiently comprehensive overview of the pupils' progress across phases, despite an increase in the amount of monitoring by the subject leaders and the senior management team.

The school improvement plan provides a generally helpful framework for improvement over one year; it is supported by separate subject action plans and the monitoring and evaluation schedule. However, it is not clear from these documents how the school expects to achieve its aims. Two of the school's key principles, notably, 'to place raising standards at the heart of all our planning' and to 'measure standards', are not given sufficient priority in the improvement plan or in the subject action plans. In the latter, there is very little reference to evaluating the impact of initiatives in relation to raising standards and increasing the rate of the pupils' progress. The school improvement plan does not contain a clear and coherent synthesis of what the pupils are expected to achieve, what value the school expects to add to the pupils' attainment levels or how the governors and core leadership team expect to measure progress in the short and medium term. There is very little detail to show how the monitoring and evaluation of initiatives link to specific tasks or when actions will take place. Consequently, it is not sufficiently clear how governors will hold the school to account for the standards achieved by the pupils or how lines of accountability are expected to operate through the leadership team, subject leaders and class teachers.

Although the work of the LEA advisers and consultants with individual teachers has had some success in addressing areas of weakness, such as planning, the overall impact of support has not been effective enough in tackling the issues that remain.

## **Action taken to address the key issues**

### **Key Issue 1: ensure that the governing body plays a stronger role in shaping the direction of the school and holds the school to account**

The governing body has strengthened its role in monitoring and evaluating the school's performance; governors have been involved in producing the school improvement plan and they receive regular progress reports from subject leaders and the core leadership team. There is an increasing focus on holding the school to account for the standards achieved by the pupils; nevertheless, the chair of governors recognises that there is still much to do in order to improve the presentation and analysis of assessment information.

Progress on this key issue is reasonable.

### **Key Issue 2: take steps to ensure that the headteacher and key staff provides effective leadership and management of the school by more rigorously evaluating the school's strengths and weaknesses and carefully planning in the medium and long term to drive up standards**

Despite more frequent monitoring and the creation of a wider debate on school improvement, evaluation processes do not meet some of the principles set out in the schools' monitoring policy and judgements about standards remains too generous.

Progress on this key issue is limited.

### **Key Issue 3: monitor rigorously and improve the quality of teaching and learning**

Progress on this key issue is limited as monitoring is more frequent but not sufficiently rigorous.

### **Key Issue 4: introduce an effective whole-school policy to address inappropriate behaviour and bullying**

The school's behaviour policy was implemented effectively in many classes although the pupils' movement around the school was more boisterous than that seen on other visits. The school has established links with various bodies such as the police and local headteachers to combat anti-social behaviour in the village.

Progress on this key issue is reasonable.

**Key Issue 5: make better use of performance data to monitor pupils' progress and take early steps to redress underachievement**

The impact of the interventions to address the needs of underachieving pupils or those making slower than expected progress in English or in mathematics has not been evaluated. Similarly, there is no analysis of data to substantiate the assertion that the change from sets to mixed ability groups in science has benefited lower-attaining pupils but restricted the achievement of the more able. Targets set for pupils in Year 6, based on their attainment at the end of Year 4, represent satisfactory, rather than good, progress and are not sufficiently challenging. There is a lack of clarity about how progress is measured and judged in Years 7 and 8. The school is in the early stages of developing procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress in the foundation subjects.

Progress on this key issue is limited.

**Key Issue 6: to meet statutory requirements the school needs to provide a daily act of collective worship, ensure that citizenship is planned for and taught and ensure that all subjects make a planned contribution to the development of ICT skills**

The school meets statutory requirements to provide a daily act of collective worship. The provision for citizenship is supported by a clear scheme of work but the quality of teaching and learning has yet to be monitored. Work on using ICT in other subjects is satisfactory overall and continues to be a priority for development next year.

Progress on this key issue is reasonable.