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30 June 2011

Mrs Asquith

The Meadows Community School
High Street
Chesterfield
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Dear Ms Asquith

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools: monitoring inspection of The Meadows Community School

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when Sue Hall and I inspected your school on 29 June 2011, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during the inspection.

As a result of the inspection on 12 May 2010, 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.

In 2010, there was a rise in the proportion of pupils gaining five or more A* to C grades at GCSE. However, there was a slight dip in those who achieved five or more A* to C grades at GCSE including in English and mathematics; 37% compared to 38% the year before. This year, school leaders have developed the 'Going Green' assessment scheme further to make it a more detailed and robust system to monitor and track pupils' progress. It shows that the school is well placed to improve outcomes this year and demonstrate a small rise in pupils' achievement since last year. The improvement in progress was also evident in lessons observed during this visit. In nine of the 13 lessons jointly observed with school leaders, teaching was good and in the others it was satisfactory. In other lessons, which were subject to brief visits, this trend was confirmed. This shows a significant improvement in the quality of teaching and learning in the school. Agreement in judgments between inspectors and the school's management was strong, showing that the school's assessment of the quality of teaching is accurate and reliable.

Improvements in teaching have been well planned and implemented. Lesson plans, devised largely within subject areas, clearly show the learning that is expected in

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lessons and how it will be achieved and assessed. Currently, the new formats are inconsistent in how they show planning for pupils who need extra support and this is an area for development by school leaders. In better lessons, there are a variety of activities, including paired and group working and independent work, which provide appropriate levels of challenge for pupils. This is not consistent in the satisfactory lessons where progress is slower and there is a lack of more finely targeted learning activities to engage pupils more fully. Since the previous inspection, the quality of teachers' questioning of pupils has improved and teachers are now more adept at asking questions which allow them to develop learning well by adapting their teaching according to pupils' responses. Nevertheless, questions would be more beneficial if they were better targeted, so that pupils could demonstrate their understanding and their level of learning. Although pupils behave well around the school and in lessons, they are sometimes too passive in their learning because teachers' questioning does not always raise curiosity and challenge pupils' thinking. Since the previous inspection, attendance has continued to improve significantly.

The monitoring and evaluation of the school's work has improved since last year. This is particularly evident in the tracking of progress and improvements seen in the quality of teaching. Teachers now have a better understanding of how they can contribute to the collection of data and are more accountable for the progress that pupils make in their lessons. This improved monitoring allows pupils, who are at risk of underachievement, to be identified earlier so that appropriate interventions, such as one-to-one tuition in English and mathematics, can be put in place. The support provided to pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities, in particular those who are deaf or hearing impaired, is good and as a result they make at least the same progress as their peers, and often better. In individual subject areas, the monitoring of performance and tracking of pupils' progress is improving, but more robustness is required to ensure that pupils are enabled to reach their full potential in all subjects. Leaders recognise that although satisfactory improvements have been made since the previous inspection, there is more work to be done to ensure that the improvements are fully embedded in the culture of the school and are promoting sustained improvements in outcomes over time. The governing body are currently taking action to disseminate the vision of the school so that all members of the school community are aware of it, but this is currently in its early days.

The local authority has provided well targeted support to the school. A particular example of this is the help provided to the recently appointed head of English by the local authority's consultant, which has supported the development of systems in this subject area.

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

David Muir
Her Majesty's Inspector



Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in May 2010:

- Increase progress and attainment through improving teaching, learning and assessment
 - using the 'Going Green' assessment data consistently to plan lessons to cater for all abilities
 - ensuring plans for lessons are detailed enough and include how learning outcomes will be met
 - improving challenge and pace, questioning techniques and the range of learning activities in lessons
 - ensuring assessment opportunities are built into lessons.
- Improve aspects of leadership and management to ensure:
 - better communication to staff, students, parents or carers of the school's vision for improvement
 - clarity about strategic roles and responsibilities
 - more time for some staff to carry out their responsibilities.