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Thursday 15 September 2011

Mrs Pamela Watts  
Headteacher  
Whytrig Community Middle School  
Western Avenue  
Seaton Delaval  
Whitley Bay  
Tyne and Wear  
NE25 0EB

Dear Mrs Watts,

### **Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools: monitoring inspection of Whytrig Community Middle School**

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 13 September 2011, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during the inspection. Please pass on my thanks to the pupils, staff, members of the governing body and representatives of the local authority with whom I spoke.

Since the previous inspection, the school roll has declined to 214 and the number of teaching staff has also been reduced. The structure of the governing body has been changed to align it more closely to that found in other schools within the federation.

As a result of the inspection on 29 and 30 June 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.

According to assessment carried out by their first schools, pupils enter Whytrig with levels of attainment that are broadly in line with those expected for their age. However, initial assessments carried out by the school are often different and levels are identified that are well below those predicted. This means it is difficult to ensure a speedy and smooth transition. For example, it is difficult to set appropriate attainment targets and measure progress for some Year 5 pupils. A process to ensure a more systematic approach to sharing information between schools and good practice between teachers has been introduced.

In 2011, at the end of Key Stage 2, pupils' attainment in English and mathematics, improved but remained below average. Fewer pupils did not make the expected progress in Key Stage 2 given their levels of attainment at the end of Key Stage 1. The progress made by boys and

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girls varies significantly between subjects and year groups. However, by the end of Year 8, according to school assessment, most pupils catch up and reach or exceed the expected levels of attainment for their age in English and mathematics. There is a growing capacity to address the inconsistency between the progress of different classes and groups.

Attendance since the previous inspection has been broadly average. During the inspection visit most pupils were well behaved and keen to learn. On rare occasions some pupils were not challenged or interested by their work and this meant they became fractious and disrupted the learning of others.

Actions taken by the school to improve the quality of teaching are beginning to have a significant impact. Observations indicate that the quality of teaching and learning has improved. In particular, more-able pupils are challenged by their work and develop good knowledge skills and understanding. Analysis of lesson plans and tracking records indicate that teachers' expectations of what these pupils can achieve have become more ambitious. Teachers use assessment data and National Curriculum levels in core subjects to plan lessons. However, lesson plans do not always indicate how pupils supported by learning support assistants will gain the independence and confidence needed to catch up with their peers.

A new approach to share leadership across the whole staff has been introduced. Subject leaders are more influential in monitoring performance, supporting lessons and coordinating intervention strategies. Leaders have an accurate understanding of the strengths and areas for improvement of the school. However, they do not always use clear criteria to measure the impact of leadership on pupils' academic and personal development. For example, the correlation between achievements, the quality of teaching and the impact of staff development are not always made clear in the school improvement plan.

The single central register of safeguarding checks made on staff complies with government recommendations. The governing body reviewed its effectiveness after the previous inspection and has begun to take a more proactive and robust approach in assessing the quality of the provision and holding leaders to account.

The school has been provided with good support from the local authority, through the work of the School Improvement Partner and various advisors and consultants.

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

Dr Andrew Johnson  
Her Majesty's Inspector

## **Annex**

### **The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place Tuesday 29 June 2010**

- Increase accountability and share leadership across the whole staff by:
  - involving subject leaders more in monitoring performance, supporting lessons and coordinating intervention strategies
  - using clear criteria to measure the impact of leadership on pupils' academic and personal development.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning so that the vast majority of teaching is good by:
  - raising teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve
  - ensuring that all teachers use assessment data and National Curriculum levels in core subjects to plan challenging lessons to match pupils' learning needs
  - systematically sharing the areas of good practice, focusing on the impact on pupils' achievement.