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18 November 2011

Mr Michael Hall  
Headteacher  
Woodhouse Middle School  
Woodhouse Lane  
Biddulph  
Stoke-on-Trent  
ST8 7DR

Dear Mr Hall

**Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools: monitoring inspection of  
Woodhouse Middle School**

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 17 November 2011, for the time you gave to our discussions and for the information which you provided before and during the inspection. Please also pass on my thanks to the pupils, and to the members of the governing body and local authority representative who attended the feedback.

Since the previous inspection there have been a number of staffing changes. Most notably, you have been appointed as headteacher and took up post in July 2011. An assistant headteacher joined the staff in September 2010. In addition, some staff have retired or left and you currently have four newly qualified teachers. A new bursar was appointed in January 2011. The governing body has been restructured into two main committees, and new members have joined. The school is part of a proposed federation to establish trust foundation status.

As a result of the inspection on 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 good progress in demonstrating a better capacity for sustained improvement.

Pupils' achievement is satisfactory. Their attainment at the end of Year 8 was broadly average in 2011 and the progress they made across the four years at the school is satisfactory. The most recent set of Key Stage 2 results indicated that pupils made expected progress in English but middle- and higher-ability pupils made slower progress in mathematics.

September 2010



There is a consistent structure to lessons which supports a greater focus on learning and progress. Pupils are encouraged to consider their progress in lessons towards increasingly challenging learning outcomes. This helps both teachers and pupils to assess what needs to be done next. In all the sessions observed, opportunities were given for pupils to work collaboratively. Routines for paired and group work have been established. The pupils' good responses to these and their very positive attitudes support their learning well. Particularly effective examples of this were observed in English, science and information and communication technology lessons. Teachers use questioning well to monitor understanding and increasingly effective use is made of questioning to extend and challenge pupils in their thinking. There are some excellent examples of written feedback which give pupils a clear understanding of how they can improve. However, there remains too much variation across subjects. The school's action planning shows that improving the quality of marking is the next area for whole-school focus. Of the 10 sessions observed, the quality of teaching was at least good in nine. This sample reflects the school's own evaluation that day-to-day teaching is improving well. Better teaching has not had time to show its impact in securing pupils' consistently good progress.

The appointment of the new headteacher has raised expectations and ensured that there is greater consistency across many aspects of the school's work. The revised performance management structure helps leaders at all levels to have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities and has also raised expectations of all teachers about pupil achievement. Other senior leaders and middle leaders are contributing well to this improving picture of consistency in most aspects of school life. A detailed and accurate analysis of attainment and progress across all years has been completed by the headteacher. This is being used by leaders at all levels to ensure a greater focus on underperforming pupils and groups of pupils. No group is being ignored.

Middle leaders, particularly those with responsibility for English and mathematics, use a more rigorous tracking system. The information from this is being shared with the special educational needs and/or disabilities coordinator as well as with leaders of individual year groups. The impact of this work is also evident in teachers' planning. A framework for monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching has also been established which is now engaging and empowering senior and middle leaders. Some teachers have also been involved in cross-subject peer observation to support the sharing and development of good practice. Seeking the views of pupils on what they enjoy and what helps them to learn has been crucial to galvanising the whole staff to change approaches to teaching and learning. Members of the governing body are also now more able to hold the school to account for its development. These improvements to the effectiveness of leadership at all levels and the impact of this in the increasing quality of teaching confirm that the school is making good progress in demonstrating a better capacity to improve.

Pupils' behaviour in lessons is good and, sometimes, exemplary because of their positive response to the high expectations set by their teachers and the very good relationships that exist. Behaviour around the site is also generally good. However, there is sometimes some boisterous behaviour on the stairs. Those pupils spoken to during the visit said they feel safe and enjoy coming to school, which is confirmed by their high levels of attendance.

The work of the school has been supported by the local high school, partner middle schools and local authority officers. Leaders are positive about all the support received. The impact of the work with colleagues from the high school is particularly evident in the increasing effectiveness of middle leadership.

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

James McNeillie  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## Annex

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

- Improve the quality of teaching to support pupils in making good progress, so that, by April 2011, at least 60% of lessons are good or better and 10% are outstanding, by:
  - planning lessons with a clear expectation of what pupils should learn
  - engaging pupils in relevant, challenging activities that offer opportunities for developing independent learning
  - strengthening teachers' questioning techniques so that they are better able to monitor and extend pupils' learning
  - ensuring that all pupils receive regular feedback on their work through good quality marking so that they know how well they are doing and how to improve their current performance.
  
- Build the school's leadership capacity by developing leadership at all levels. In particular:
  - review the roles and responsibilities of senior and middle leaders to clarify accountability for key areas of the school's work
  - increase the rigour and consistency of both whole-school and departmental systems for monitoring and evaluating all aspects of the school's work
  - make better use of assessment information so that areas of underperformance are identified quickly and appropriate interventions are introduced promptly.