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30 September 2013

Tracey Burnside  
Associate Headteacher  
The Meadows Community School  
High Street  
Old Whittington  
S41 9LG

Dear Ms Burnside

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to The Meadows Community School**

Following my visit to your school on 27 September 2013, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the findings of my visit. 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 second monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in January 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Senior leaders and governors are not taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the last section 5 inspection. The school should take immediate action to:

- standardise the assessment of students' work across all departments through regular moderation to ensure robust and accurate records of attainment and progress
- make subject leaders accountable for the quality and improvement of teaching; and students' progress across classes
- agree a format for providing regular reports to the governing body on the progress of cohorts and different groups of students from Year 7 to 11
- resolve uncertainty about the school's senior leadership to support stability and rapid improvement.

## **Evidence**

During the visit, meetings were held with you, the Executive Headteacher, representatives of the Governing Body and a representative from the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. A telephone discussion was held with the Chair of the Governing Body. The school improvement plan was evaluated. A range of documentation was scrutinised including lesson observation records, an evaluation of GCSE performance, planning for quality assurance, local authority reports of visits and governing body minutes. Subject leaders for English and mathematics were observed teaching, with senior leaders.

## **Context**

At the end of the summer term the headteacher retired. Three members of staff were made redundant including the deputy headteacher. Four other members of staff left the school. An Executive Headteacher was appointed for two days a week from a local academy for one year commencing 1 September, 2013. An Associate Headteacher is seconded to the school for one year. A temporary appointment to the leadership team has been made to lead work on teaching and learning. Four new teachers have been appointed. The school roll has reduced by fifty students since the monitoring visit.

## **Main findings**

The school has not made the improvements expected since the inspection and monitoring visit. The analysis of GCSE performance for 2013 indicates that the school failed to meet the government's current floor standards for secondary schools, which set the minimum expectations for students' attainment and progress. The proportion of students to make the progress expected in English and mathematics from Key Stage 2 is significantly below expectation. The attainment gap between students known to be eligible for pupil premium funding and other students is much wider than the national picture. These outcomes are well below the targets set by the school, and agreed by the governing body.

These results were a surprise to the school and reflect a lack of rigour in the processes used to check the quality of the school's work. Expectations were too low and insufficient emphasis was placed on the progress that students should be making from their starting points in Year 7. Evaluations of teaching quality are over generous with most lessons judged to be good. Too little attention is given to using other sources of evidence such as progress information and work scrutiny to underpin judgements on teaching. Subject leaders are not sufficiently accountable for making improvements in teaching quality or for students' progress from Year 7.

There is evidence that the governing body did ask challenging questions about students' progress. They were reassured that the school was on track to meet the targets set. They were shocked and disappointed about the GCSE results. They

rightly conclude that assessment in school is not accurate and that challenge by senior and middle leaders is lacking. Reports are not routinely presented to the governing body that provide the key messages from data collection or the impact of action plans. Milestones are not explicit in action plans to support the checking of progress over time.

The Executive Headteacher and Associate Headteacher have very quickly identified shortcomings. A detailed quality assurance programme is set to target each department in turn to identify areas for improvement. Members of the governing body will join this programme to strengthen their contribution to self-valuation. Training opportunities including joint work with the partner school have been welcomed by staff. The sharing of resources is already making a difference. A new data tracking system has been introduced this term, in addition to more challenging targets for students. It is too soon to evaluate the impact of this approach.

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

### **External support**

The local authority has provided consultant support for identified teachers. The Governing Body is less aware of input linked to whole school leadership and management. The local authority has supported the temporary leadership arrangements. However, there is a lack of clarity about the temporary nature of the school's senior leadership which has an impact on stability and confidence. External support provided by the partner school is increasing and developing well through visits, training, coaching and curriculum links.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Derbyshire local authority.

Yours sincerely

Nada Trikic  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**