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19 December 2013

Mrs Catherine Crossley  
Headteacher  
Witton Middle School  
Old Coach Road  
WR9 8BD

Dear Mrs Crossley

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Witton Middle School**

Following my visit to your school on 18 December 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 first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in October 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Senior leaders and governors/responsible authority/proprietor/sponsor are taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the recent section 5 inspection. The school should take further action to:

- increase the frequency and effectiveness of reviews of learning in lessons, so pupils have a greater awareness of how they can achieve their targets
- ensure the school improvement plan includes indicators that can be used to evaluate progress in every year group, including for different groups of pupils.

### **Evidence**

During the visit, meetings were held with you and other leaders, three members of the Governing Body and a representative of the local authority. The school improvement plan, information related to the tracking of pupils' progress and the minutes of the governing body meetings were evaluated. Short visits were made to seven lessons to observe teaching.

## **Context**

Two parent governors have joined the governing body since the section 5 inspection.

## **Main findings**

Teachers have increased the opportunities pupils have to undertake problem-solving activities in all subjects. Writing is improving because teachers are ensuring that pupils almost always have a clear audience in mind. Improvements to marking and more discussion about targets is helping pupils to be clear about how they can improve their work. Pupils are gradually taking more responsibility for ensuring their work reflects their targets. In an effective Year 5 lesson, the teacher used regular 'light bulb' moments to help clarify how pupils could undertake the activity at the highest possible level. Other lessons are not quite so effective because opportunities were missed to regularly review learning to ensure pupils are clear about how they could excel.

You and your deputy are an effective team. You have a very accurate view of the strengths and weaknesses in teaching. You are creating a positive atmosphere within is encouraging staff to be more willing to share ideas and attempt new approaches. The school has improved its use of assessment information so it is now much better placed to hold staff to account for the progress pupils make. The school's improvement plan covers all the issues identified at the section 5 inspection. It contains very useful indicators that allow the school to monitor even the relatively small improvements to teaching that might occur in a short space of time. Although the school has very ambitious targets for improving the progress pupils make, these are not highlighted sufficiently in the school improvement plan.

Heads of Year and the Heads of English and mathematics are also ensuring effective team work and as a result lessons are planned and evaluated more effectively. As a result, pupils are engaging with a wide variety of interesting activities that inspire them to learn. Senior leaders have recognised that the next step is to involve other leaders more in monitoring and evaluating teaching.

The governing body has a good knowledge of the improvements the school has made since its section 5 inspection. Governors are also clear about the criteria they need to use to monitor the progress the school is making. Their participation in school meetings and training sessions has been important in developing this insight.

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 sensibly established a process of regular review to monitor the progress the school is making. Where the need for further support is identified, this is being provided. The school's adviser has undertaken joint observations with the school's headteacher in order to help ensure the accuracy of the judgements made about teaching.

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

Yours sincerely

Kevin Sheldrick  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**