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30 September 2014

Tracey Burnside  
Whittington Green School  
High Street  
Old Whittington  
Chesterfield  
S41 9LP

Dear Mrs Burnside

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Whittington Green School**

Following my visit to your school on 29 September 2014, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. 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 third 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 recent section 5 inspection. The school should take immediate action to:

- increase rates of progress made by the school's oldest students, particularly in English and mathematics
- ensure students' books reflect that their teachers have high expectations of what they can achieve
- consistently give students time to respond to teachers' marking
- share the school's best practice evident in the leadership of the science department.

### **Evidence**

During the inspection, meetings were held with you, three senior leaders, five members of the governing body and a representative of the local authority to discuss the action taken since the last inspection. The school improvement plan was

evaluated. You took me on a tour of the school and we visited several classrooms to see the learning that was taking place.

## **Context**

You began your role as the school's permanent headteacher at the beginning of this term. You had been working at the school as associate headteacher for a year. Two senior leaders did not continue in their management positions after the summer and they now have different roles within the school. Three new senior leaders have been appointed and you also appointed new heads of English and mathematics; all five of these members of staff already worked at the school. Nine teachers have left the school since the previous monitoring visit in September 2013; you had judged that several of these members of staff required significant professional support in order to become good teachers. Three teachers joined the school this term. The school roll has further reduced since the previous monitoring visit, though a number of students have joined since September 2013 to increase the size of Year 8.

## **Main findings**

A greater proportion of the school's Year 11 students made the progress expected of them in English and mathematics in 2014 than when compared to the previous year. However, there are still too few of the school's older students who are making good progress in these and other subjects. Attainment is currently just below the government's floor standards. Until this improves, the school is unlikely to be judged as providing a good standard of education.

The rate of progress you have been able to make in all areas has been compromised by the necessity to create a variety of basic, effective systems to manage various aspects of the school performance. Since the last monitoring visit, for example, you have completely redesigned the systems for evaluating the quality of teaching in the school and how this relates to the performance management of teachers.

You and your three new senior leaders acknowledge that a culture of low expectation of both students and teachers had been allowed to develop. This is changing and the students appreciate this. Teachers, including subject leaders, are far more accountable for the progress made by their students. This is beginning to have a positive impact on both teaching quality and on the progress students make. However, the impact of the changes was not enough to significantly improve the fortunes of those Year 11 students who left the school in 2014.

While senior leaders and teachers are applying higher expectations in terms of conduct and uniform, this does not yet extend to the presentation of their written work. It is vital that this is addressed and that teachers do not accept work that is well below the standards that students can achieve.

Teachers' marking of students' books has improved. Some are marking students' work rigorously and including extension challenges where appropriate, though this is not consistent across subjects. Even when the marking is of high quality it is not always having the desired effect on progress because students are not given sufficient time to respond to it.

There was a significant increase in rates of progress made in science in 2014. This department is led very effectively; the teachers engage the students and the feedback teachers give them effectively supports their progress. Best practice in this area should be shared across the school with immediate effect. You have now made this subject leader part of an extended school leadership team.

Teachers are taking advantage of a wide range of professional development opportunities, some of which are in conjunction with local, outstanding schools. This is encouraging teachers to think more critically about their practice. Students say that most lessons are now more interesting than they were a year ago and you judge that the quality of teaching in the school has improved significantly in this time.

You have organised extra-curricular lessons in several GCSE subjects for any Year 11 students who wish to get more help. You have directed those students at risk of underachievement to attend relevant sessions. These have only just begun so no impact is evident yet, though students appreciate these opportunities.

The governing body has changed markedly since the last monitoring visit. Four governors have been recruited, including a new Chair of the Governing Body who is an experienced education professional. In the words of one governor, 'we have moved from passive to active'. Governors now bring a greater level of challenge to school leaders to demonstrate the impact of the actions they are taking. Two new sub-committees have been formed to help governors become more efficient. Several governors have been on training courses, including on safer recruitment, and more are planned. Every subject now has a link governor and every governor has had their role and responsibilities made clear to them. Governors can accurately identify the school's areas for development and they are committed to improving the life chances of students.

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 categorised the school as one which causes concern; despite the progress that has been made, the local authority representative understands that further progress is needed before the school is judged to be good. The local authority representative has offered support to the school by: taking part in the quality assurance of the school's new systems for performance management;

offering management training for subject leaders; and brokering consultancy support for the English and mathematics departments. These actions have helped to improve the school. Members of staff from Shirebrook Academy have provided effective support to the headteacher and to most subject teachers, particularly in the mathematics department.

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

Yours sincerely

Ian McNeilly  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**