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Ms Angela Wells  
Buckingham School  
London Road  
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MK18 1AT

Dear Ms Wells

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Buckingham School**

Following my visit to your school on 24 October 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 second monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in December 2013. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

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

- embed changes so they lead to improved GCSE examination results in mathematics and science
- ensure leaders make better use of information on students' progress when they evaluate the quality of teaching
- collate information on the progress made by sixth form students more clearly so it can be better used to hold teachers to account.

### **Evidence**

During the inspection I held meetings with you, your two deputy headteachers, a group of curriculum leaders, representatives from the Buckinghamshire Learning Trust and three governors, including the Vice Chair, to discuss actions taken since the previous inspection. You accompanied me on the visits I made to classes in

science and mathematics as well as the sixth form. I evaluated your improvement plan and scrutinised students' books.

## **Context**

In September 2014 two new deputy headteachers and a new curriculum leader for mathematics joined the school.

## **Main findings**

Since my previous visit, you have made sensible changes to your senior team and consequently strengthened the school's capacity to move to good. One of your deputy headteachers has developed an effective new tracking system. It provides leaders with information on how well departments are performing and individual students' progressing. The information from this system is starting to be better used by leaders when they make judgements about the quality of teaching. In the past these judgements have been too generous because insufficient emphasis has been placed on students' achievement.

Middle leaders are rightly using the system to identify students who are not making enough progress to meet their predicted GCSE grades in order to provide them with extra help. Senior leaders now use the information on students' progress to ask challenging questions of the curriculum leaders they manage. However, teachers are not using this information effectively to ensure the work they plan for students is challenging enough. The information you have on the progress of students in the sixth form is not collated effectively. It is not currently being used as well as the information on students' progress in Key Stages 3 and 4.

Your information shows that Year 11 students are achieving more highly in English than in mathematics or science. In some mathematics and science classes we visited, individual students were being targeted to answer more demanding questions. However, this was not consistent. In some classes teachers were going through the same calculation methods with all students. Some students already knew the method and had got the right answer. This slowed down their progress.

Checks made on students' books show teachers are now consistently providing students with helpful ways to improve their work. Key Stage 4 science students sit regular practice tests based on GCSE examination papers. At the end of these tests teachers provide them with useful tips on how to do better next time. However, teachers are not helping students to answer questions that carry more marks and require them to write at length. As a result, too many students are receiving no marks for their answers.

Your school improvement plan has been updated following your most recent set of examination results. The changes that have been completed successfully remain on

the plan. As a result the plan has become very long and some of the more recent new priorities are not sufficiently prominent. The teaching section of the plan does not include enough detail about how changes will impact on students' achievement.

The governors are very sharp about how they can best support the school in making rapid improvements. They are clear that they need to ensure the school now focuses on embedding the changes. To this end they have wisely separated the 'achievement, teaching and learning committee' from other committees. Buckinghamshire Learning Trust has agreed to support governors in framing more challenging questions.

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 school and governors have benefited from well-planned support given by consultant leaders from Buckinghamshire Learning Trust. Last year this support was bespoke and helped a number of teachers to improve. Following a recent review, the new support will astutely focus on helping leaders to make more rigorous checks on the progress of improvements. Buckinghamshire Learning Trust will also provide some subject specific support for the science curriculum leader. Leaders and teachers have visited several local schools and some have undertaken nationally accredited training. The impact of this is not yet being fully shown in improved achievement.

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

Yours sincerely

Sarah Hubbard  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**