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Mr Paul Woodhouse  
Headteacher  
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Northfield Road  
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West Midlands  
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Dear Mr Woodhouse

### **Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to King's Norton Boys' School**

Following my visit to your school on 21 April 2016, 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 first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in December 2015. 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 in order to become a good school.

The school should take further action to:

- further sharpen plans for improvement, so that actions are linked to more precise measures of success
- improve the attendance of disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs or disability
- accelerate the pace of improvements to the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement in science
- ensure that pupils receive the right levels of challenge and support in lessons so that they learn at the pace at which they are capable.

## **Evidence**

During the inspection, meetings were held with you, as the headteacher, senior and middle leaders, and governors, including the chair of the governing body. I also spoke by telephone to a representative of the Birmingham Education Partnership (BEP), who is the district lead for Sutton. The BEP is the organisation that is providing support services and monitoring the school on behalf of the local authority. In addition, I held a telephone conversation with the headteacher of Swanshurst School, who is providing support to the school through the Bishop Challoner Teaching School Alliance.

I undertook brief visits to a number of lessons accompanied by school leaders and looked at examples of pupils' work. I also spoke to pupils during lessons. The school improvement plan was evaluated. A range of the school's documents and records were also examined including those relating to the progress and attainment of current pupils.

## **Context**

Since the previous inspection, one governor has left the governing body and three new governors have joined.

## **Main findings**

You accept the findings of the previous inspection. These aligned to your own evaluation that the school is not yet a good school. Since your arrival last academic year, you have driven important changes to the culture and ethos of the school, so that the mediocrity that had slowed the pace of improvements in the school in the past is no longer accepted. As a result, leaders and governors have a more realistic understanding of the school's performance, are far more focused on raising standards and are starting to offer the challenge that is necessary to deliver improvements with the urgency needed.

You have rewritten the school improvement plan so that it is focused on tackling the weaknesses identified in the last inspection. This plan features a number of appropriate and well-considered strategies to bring about positive improvement, and builds on the changes you had already recognised needed to be made. The plan also sets out some suitable targets for improving pupils' progress and raising attainment in both the main school and the sixth form. Timescales for implementing changes are sensible. You have also worked well with governors to put in place a strategy to secure the future development and sustainability of the sixth form. However, some of the criteria for success offered in the school improvement plan are still too vague, such as those for improving teaching. This weakens the effectiveness of the plan because leaders and governors cannot gauge the impact of some aspects of their work sharply, and thus fully secure accountability. In addition, some of the targets would benefit from being broken down into smaller steps, so that leaders can check

at regular intervals if they are on track to meet them. Nevertheless, the quality of this plan, and the action plans produced by subject leaders, is considerably better than those that were in place at the time of the previous inspection.

You have given a high priority to improving the skills and abilities of leaders in the school. Leaders have benefited from a range of training that is helping them to develop a better understanding of their roles and responsibilities. Systems for tracking the progress of pupils are more refined and coherent, with a much stronger focus on making leaders and teachers accountable for ensuring that pupils make the progress they should do. Senior leaders are supporting subject leaders who are increasingly involved in checking the work of their teams, and using the information gathered from these checks to make improvements. Important work has taken place through partnerships forged through the Bishop Challoner Teaching School Alliance that has enabled leaders to learn from practice in good or outstanding schools. This has helped them, for example, to implement stronger assessment practices in subjects such as mathematics, and put in place more rigorous monitoring systems in the sixth form so that teachers and leaders are now able to identify and tackle underachievement more quickly than they have done in the past. Subject leaders are able to articulate more clearly the impact of their work. However, there continues to be some variability in the impact of these leaders in their subject areas, with improvements slower, for instance, in science.

I observed during my short visits to lessons how the training for teachers that has taken place is starting to improve their teaching. For example, the work presented to pupils in mathematics enabled pupils to focus on demanding problem-solving activities that required them to think hard. This reflects some changes that leaders have made to the curriculum to make sure that pupils, including those of higher ability, are being challenged to do well throughout their time at the school. I also saw how teachers are making sure that they put in place extra support to help pupils who are identified as falling behind. Additional training provided in relation to the school's marking policy is strengthening the application of this policy and teachers' feedback is increasingly helping pupils to improve their learning. However, there remains, in some lessons, a lack of pace and challenge, so that pupils learn too slowly. In other cases, where the work is demanding, there is insufficient guidance offered for least-able pupils. Nevertheless, teaching is improving in response to the training, support and guidance staff are receiving and to leaders' higher expectations.

The school's information about the progress and attainment of current pupils is showing generally positive patterns of improvement. Forecasts for this academic year show that pupils are expected to secure better results in their GCSE examinations than they have done in the past, including in English and mathematics. Progress in science, although showing improvement, continues to lag behind that of other core subjects. Sixth-form data similarly shows broad improvements, and leaders wisely continue to use external support to help to strengthen the quality of provision in subjects where weaker achievement has been identified, such as physics

and mathematics. At key stage 3, the progress of disadvantaged pupils is falling behind that of others in the school.

Behaviour that I saw in lessons was good. Pupils were attentive, focused on their learning and keen to do well. In the sixth form, students articulated well their high aspirations, and demonstrated great commitment to their studies. Rates of exclusion have continued to fall. Despite the good attendance of many pupils, the absence rates of disadvantaged pupils and pupils who have special educational needs or disability are concerns.

Governors are increasingly able to challenge the information they are presented with to ensure that they have an accurate and realistic picture of the school's performance. They are monitoring closely that leaders are bringing about improvements in the areas needed. Some recent appointments have added valuable strengths and expertise to the governing body so that governors can perform their duties more efficiently and effectively. The external review of governance has highlighted some important areas in which governors need to do better, and they are continuing to access support to help them in doing this.

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

### **External support**

You have welcomed external support for the school. The Bishop Challoner Teaching School Alliance has provided valuable help for the development of leadership in the school and support for key subject areas where achievement is weaker. In addition, the BEP is monitoring the progress of leaders in bringing about improvements. The BEP's improvement lead for the school has a clear understanding of what the school needs to do in order to further move forward, and is providing robust challenge and support to ensure that this happens.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body and the director of children's services for Birmingham. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Chris Chapman  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**